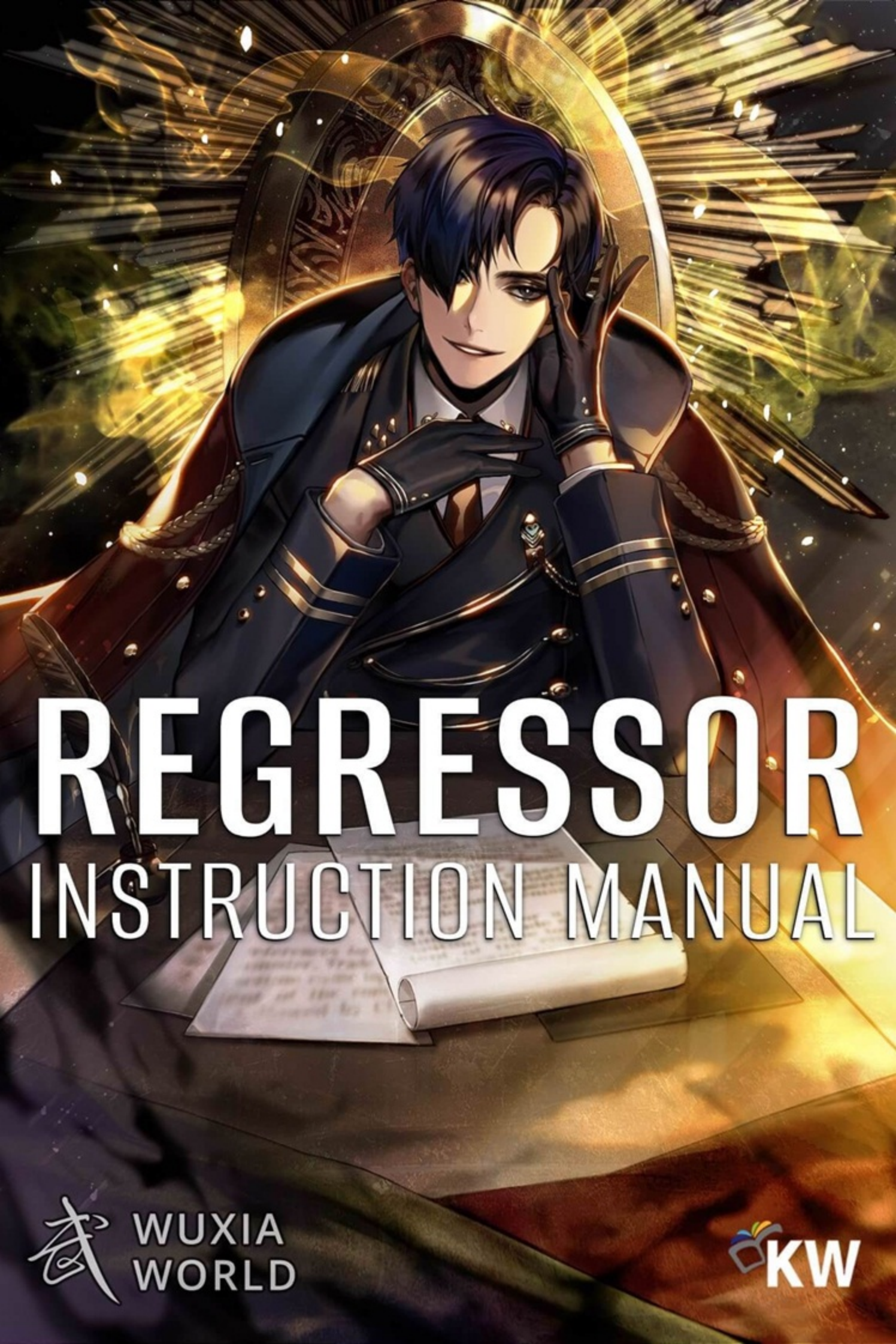
REGRESSOR
INSTRUCTION MANUAL
WUXIA WORLD
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REGRESSOR INSTRUCTION MANUAL

– 회귀자 사용설명서 –

- VOLUME 13 -

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[WUXIAWORLD]

CHAPTER 602
BENIGOA NET

- The continent's chosen warrior will wield the holy sword and fight against the demons of darkness pretending to be angels. The chosen warrior will stand on the left of the hero wielding a glowing sword, and they will save humanity from darkness. It will be the sword that will slay the enemies of the holiest alchemist. The hero will become a ray of light that will vanquish the fallen darkness.

-…

- The warrior is a gift of the light and your hope against the false ones. This sword will remain on the continent for a long time, and it will protect the continent. Its destiny is tied to the continent as well.

-…

- Sons and daughters of light fighting under the name of Benigoa. This incompetent goddess believes that you will overcome the trial of the gray sword. I firmly believe that you won't succumb to the great trials and the darkness to come.

- I will keep that in mind, Great Benigoa.

- I'm always thankful to you, Father Basel.

- How can you say that to a stupid mortal like me?

- I hope this pure soul…

- *Ahhhhhhh*…

-…

-…

- *Oh*, yes. You just saw a recap of what happened this morning, and the Vatican has

yet to make an official statement. Have you heard of anything new, Reporter Kim Sung-Kyeong?

- I'm Reporter Kim Sung-Kyeong of Channel Benigoa, and I'm currently here at the Vatican. Unfortunately, an official statement hasn't come out just yet. Many denizens are watching, and many different rumors are starting to spread. We were told by the officials of the Vatican that there would be a statement as soon as Father Lee Ki-Young awakened after the goddess' descent.

- Is it safe to assume that they haven't finished analyzing the exact meaning of the prophecy and the holy sword?

- Yes. It looks like they've been discussing how the owner of this holy sword will be selected. It's likely that a heated debate will continue as they discuss the trials the holy sword will give and whether there are other conditions for being the owner.

- Oh dear. In that case, have they revealed when the discussion was going to end?

- No, there hasn't been any news of that just yet. The holy knights of the Vatican have also cordoned off the site where the gray holy sword descended.

'Geez… how many times are they going to show the same scene?'

However, I couldn't help but watch it again and again.

It was the same thing back on Earth. It was common for broadcasting companies to show the same thing over and over and over again. Once they heard of something new, they would spend an hour or two talking about it.

A gray sword descended from the heavens in a massive pillar of light.

How majestic was that scene?

The priests had surrounded Father Lee Ki-Young while channeling their holy power, and a massive pillar of light abruptly descended from the heavens. The jaws of the Vatican officials dropped to the ground, and everything went silent.

It was such a spectacular scene, and the scene where Father Basel carried the unconscious Father Lee Ki-Young away reminded me[1] of a scene depicted in mythology.

The people's reactions were so intense that it would be an understatement to describe it as *overwhelming*, and the people were pouring out all of their sentiments in Benigoa Net.

'I think it has gotten worse.'

There were many people thinking that they might be the chosen warrior. I took out my Goddess' Hand Mirror and noticed posts that were gaining popularity.

[Title: Is Father Lee Ki-Young Okay? (Comments: 23)]

[Posted By: Nature Lover]

[Title: Vatican Live Broadcast (Comments: 5,023)]

[Posted By: Lindel Villager]

[Title: Let's Interpret Benigoa's Prophecy. We Can Roughly Guess How Things Will Go (Comments: 443)]

[Posted By: Flower]

[Title: My Friend Has Amnesia. He Said Not to Tell Anyone… What Should I Do? (Comments: 122)]

[Posted By: I Like Blue]

These posts were posted today, but the post about someone's friend suffering from amnesia bothered me, so I tapped on it.

[Title: My Friend Has Amnesia. He Said Not to Tell Anyone… What Should I Do? (Comments: 122)]

[Posted By: I Like Blue]

[My friend has amnesia. We've been in the same party for the longest time now, and we shared quite a few hardships and joys. A few days ago, he gave me the shock of my life. He says he's suffering from a sequela due to the 27th Legion's invasion. I can't stop crying, and I'm having trouble focusing on my work. If possible, I'd like to notify the other party members and see if we can all find a way to solve this, but…

my friend asked me not to tell them because he doesn't want to be a burden. He said he can handle it alone… I feel frustrated, but… I agreed to his request for now. However, he's been spacing out more and more, and it's bothering me. What would you guys do if you were in my shoes?… Omitted]

[Unidentified ID: What else can we do? Is that Alzheimer's? Since he said that he wants to die with Alzheimer's without anyone knowing, it's best to just leave him alone.]

[Nature Lover: Another troll has appeared. OP, it's better to ignore comments written by people like them. First, I'd like to tell you to hang in there. I know many people are suffering from a sequela due to the invasion, and it breaks my heart to know that your friend is one of those people. There's not much I can say to make you feel better, but… I think it's best if you respect your friend's opinion. I'm sure he's suffering the most… Omitted]

[Unidentified ID: I think he's faking it. There are many people pretending that they're mentally ill to receive a continental pension. And Nature Lover is always speaking informally, but they pretend to be kind in posts like this. So fake.]

[Lindel Villager: If he wanted to receive continental pensions, he should announce it to the public, not keep it to himself. There are many people around me who are in a similar situation… It does happen.]

[Dirt Spoon: I think the story itself is fake… There are many people suffering from a sequela due to the invasion, but I don't recall anyone suffering from amnesia. I think an attention whore who wants to receive likes made this whole thing up.]

[I Like Blue: It would be nice if he were making it up.]

[Unidentified ID: You'll get a dislike from me.]

[I Like Blue: I'm really not making it up. I'm serious.]

'Unidentified ID is acting like a troll here as well.'

I tapped the next button because someone else's heartbreaking story wasn't really that important to me.

[Title: I Think I'm the Chosen Warrior… (Comments: 423)]

[Posted By: Tied Kim Kyung-Shik]

[Goddess Benigoa appeared in my dream last night, and… the dream was kind of interesting. She approached me and handed me a sword, then I felt I was becoming holy. I can't tell you who I am or where I'm from for privacy's sake, but anyway, I deal with holy magic… When I woke up, my holy stats increased by five points. Isn't this enough proof that I'm the chosen warrior? I'm going to pack my stuff and leave to pull out the sword. In three days, this post will become a part of history.]

[Dirt Spoon: It'll be amazing if that happens… You're already going on a pilgrimage?]

[Red Mercenary Job Seeker: Why are there so many comments on this ridiculous and bullshit post? Stop with the bullshit, guys. Get a job.]

[Unidentified ID: Do you really think that commoners will be allowed access to the gray holy sword? That's a more ridiculous idea than this post. I'm sure Father Lee Ki-Young, the higher-ups of the Vatican, and the Continental Protection Management Committee are already searching for candidates. They're just using the word *chosen* to make it look special. I'm sure once the meeting is over, they're going to use the media and say, *we've found the chosen warrior guys.*]

[Nature Lover: It's so absurd to see such an ignorant person make nonsensical assumptions. I'm sure they'll reveal it to the commoners first. I'm sure there is a prerequisite, but I heard that it's open to everyone on the continent.]

[Lindel Villager: Staff of the Blue Guild… is that true?]

[Nature Lover: I can't tell you the details, and please don't call me Staff of the Blue Guild. I'll get caught.]

[Unidentified ID: Prerequisites? Isn't that just an excuse for them to take everything for themselves?]

[Nature Lover: Did you not hear a word of what Goddess Benigoa said? You do remember her mentioning the trial of the gray sword, right? The moment commoners touch the sword, their mana will be instantly exhausted, and their souls will leave them.]

[Unidentified ID: That argument again? *Hehehe*. Are you going to pretend to prove it this time as well and then just run away?]

[Virtues Public Relations Committee Chairman: Nature Lover is right. A holy knight in the organization unknowingly grabbed the holy sword and collapsed with his holy power exhausted. The incident created many rumors about how the chosen warrior is going to be selected. If we pick a random commoner, they might just die… So it's kind of difficult to allow the public access to the holy sword…]

[Unidentified ID: How should I know? Looks like everyone in this thread is talented at ganging up on someone. It's funny how you guys are backing each other up.

[Nature Lover has blocked Virtues Public Relations Committee Chairman.]

[Virtues Public Relations Committee Chairman: ???]

[Dirt Spoon: I think they blocked the wrong person… They were probably trying to block Unidentified ID but made a mistake.]

[Nature Lover: ^^;;]

'These people always have something to say, and they're always arguing.'

I had no idea where they were from, but I really wanted to see their face at least once.

I paid more attention to Nature Lover's Comment. They quickly deleted their comment back then, but they still showed proof that they were a member of the Blue Guild by showing everyone their Blue Guild badge and employee card.

Of course, there was no guarantee that what they had shown us was real, but their comments had to be more reliable than Unidentified ID's comments.

'As expected… '

Goddess Benigoa had described it as a trial, so one's resolve had to be strong enough to have even an iota of chance to succeed. A holy knight collapsed upon grabbing the sword, so it was definitely not an ordinary trial.

Both sides got into a heated debate in the comments section, and the debate soon digressed until it was no longer related to Tied Kim Kyung-Shik's post.

However, there were still many people writing comments.

[Unidentified ID: Does it even make sense to faint upon holding the holy sword? With that logic in mind, it should be called a magic sword rather than a holy sword. Its side effect is concerning. Do you really think that Goddess Benigoa is crazy enough to bestow something like that upon the continent?]

[Lindel Villager: It makes sense. Have you already forgotten what Goddess Benigoa said about qualifications? Are you saying that we should allow common villagers to hold that sword? The chosen warrior will wield that sword against demons, so isn't it only natural for us to expect that they won't be affected by the holy sword's side effect?]

[Unidentified ID: Assuming much? Prove your claims if you're trying to invalidate what I'm saying.]

[Lindel Villager: A chosen warrior will be able to wield the sword with ease. I'm sure of it. I'm scared, so I won't attempt the trial. If you're curious, you can confirm it yourself.

'Should I go there and give it a try?'

I was kind of scared, but who knows? I might be the chosen one.

'Who am I kidding? I'm busy with Zone Five right now.'

I thought perhaps I could get the details if I were to ask Mr. Park—no, Mr. Park Deok-Gu, but I was still really scared.

I gulped and looked at the Goddess' Hand Mirror again…

- This is Reporter Kim Sung-Kyeong. The crowd is coming. The spokesperson of the Vatican is about to make an official announcement. *Ah*… Yes. Sister Jayna has come out herself.

The higher-ups were finally about to announce the details.

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1. Mr. Kim's point of view ☜

CHAPTER 603
THE DILEMMA OF A LIFETIME (1)

-The Vatican has decided to take overall control of the area where the gray holy sword is located for the denizens' health and safety.

- Does that mean that the Vatican and the Continental Protection Management Committee will prevent the commoners from taking the test?

- *Ah*, I apologize… please ask after the entire announcement is over… We'll provide a Q&A session.

- No, it's fine, Father Glang. I'm going to answer that later anyway, so why not I answer that question right now? Anyway, the Vatican and the Continental Protection Management Committee are not trying to take away the rights of the commoners from taking the test. Anyone who wants to see if they're qualified can submit a request to take the test through the major guilds all over the continent or through Benigoa Net. The Vatican will pick the candidates through a simple preliminary test from those who have submitted an official application.

- If…

- We'll be transparent with the test, and we'll make sure everyone can participate. Everyone participating in the gray sword's trial will be revealed through the goddess' mirror. However, if we do not find a warrior who deserves the sword after a certain period of time, we'll have no choice but to pick someone randomly.

-…

- The Vatican will shoulder all the costs. We won't ask their age or where they're from. It doesn't matter where they work or what they do for a living. We won't determine their qualifications based on their adventurer title or their existing fame. If they truly care for the continent and have a good heart, that's it. They are qualified.

-…

- I promise, here and now, that the Continental Protection Management Committee and the Vatican will utilize every available method and do our best to select the chosen warrior. That's all.

-…

- That is all from Sister Jayna. Now… we'll take a few questions. Reporters, you may—

- I'm Reporter Bang Joon-Woo! I'm curious about Chairman Lee Ki-Young's condition. What is his exact condition? Is he suffering from a side effect of the goddess' advent?

- Father Lee Ki-Young is currently resting. He's tired physically, and fortunately, we haven't found anything wrong with his body.

- Please tell us how the Vatican and other orders are interpreting Goddess Benigoa's words! How did Chairman Lee Ki-Young react?

- That's not something I can tell you right now. I'll do my best to answer it through the media soon.

- The denizens of the continent are getting more and more interested in the gray sword. If someone worthy of the gray sword appears, what kind of support and benefits will they receive? Will they be affiliated with the Vatican or with the Continental Protection Management Committee?

- Nothing has been decided yet. At the moment, the Vatican's focus is on finding the warrior who can pull out the gray sword. What comes afterward is still being discussed, so please wait a bit longer. Regarding the affiliation, we're planning on respecting the chosen warrior's opinion. I hope this answers your question.

- What is the exact name of the gray sword?

- At the moment, we're unable to confirm the details of the sword.

- Does it have something to do with the sword's abilities?

- We have decided not to announce the details of the holy sword. I will no longer take questions related to that.

- That's…

- The denizens are interested in that. Please make a short comment!

- Due to the time limit, we'll be ending the Q&A session.

- Please make one more comment!

- Please tell us more! Does it have anything to do with the demon contractors who appeared at Zone Five?

- Please make a comment regarding the status of the demon contractors! What is the Vatican doing about them?

- What about Chairman Lee Ki-Young's current condition?

- I'll be sure to let you know soon.

- Father Glang! Sister Jayna! Please make one more comment!

'They look like a group of zombies.'

"Reporters are scary," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"It can't be helped," I[1] said.

Many people were interested in it, after all.

"I feel like the reporters have been acting too out of line recently… Should we do something to keep them in line?" she asked.

"No, we knew that they would react that way. I actually would've been disappointed if they didn't show that kind of reaction," I replied.

"Yeah… you're right," she commented.

The chance to change one's fate had appeared, so their reaction wasn't strange. The Vatican didn't announce its warrior support program, but everyone probably had similar ideas.

'A chance to turn our life around! The lottery! Holy Sword Coin!'

They would instantly receive attention, honor, power, and authority, as well as training from high-ranking adventurers and above epic-ranked items the moment they became the chosen warrior.

However, I was sure that they had forgotten about the fact that they had to fight on the front lines for the sake of the continent. I wasn't criticizing the commoners who were focused more on the benefits than the responsibility because I understood their feelings.

I would've thought the same if I weren't sitting in this nice office drinking this nice cup of coffee. I was sure the majority of the viewers were going to participate with their heads in the clouds.

"By the way, oppa. You got this… from *them*, right?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"Yeah, I got this holy sword from them," I replied.

"I feel like the procedure is going to be really annoying… You're sure that someone who can use it properly will appear?" she asked.

"Probably…" I mumbled.

"You don't sound very confident," she commented.

"It's because I honestly don't know. Still, don't you think there's at least one or two people on the continent capable of wielding it? The continent has so many people on it. Actually, I feel like it'll react to you… Do you want to become the chosen warrior?" I asked.

"Stop joking…" she said.

"I'm serious. You have potential. It won't reject you, at the very least… I'm sure you'll last longer than the holy knight who fainted as soon as he touched it," I told her.

"The chosen warrior has to be someone we can use. We need manpower, and it's not guaranteed that we can even find the chosen warrior.

"This matter is too big for us to handle. It's like trying to find a needle in a haystack… What are you going to do if the chosen warrior doesn't appear?" she asked.

“The sword won’t be as picky as you think when selecting someone,” I answered.

There were academic theories about mythic-ranked items being extremely picky, but I didn’t think this sword was *that* picky. In other words, the sword wouldn’t be the same as the one in our past lives when it poured all its heart and soul into selecting its owner.

As long as it liked the person, it would probably choose them.

The chosen warrior was important to me as well, as I would use them multiple times. If possible, it would make things comfortable if the chosen warrior were someone I could get along with. Their nature itself didn’t really matter, but… if possible…

‘I want someone young and a pushover.’

With a meaningless sense of responsibility and with an open mind…

‘They can’t be greedy about power or too materialistic… ’

If they were naive on top of that, I wouldn’t be able to ask for more.

This gray holy sword was once wielded by a fallen angel, so it could probably taint innocent humans, and even if that weren’t the case, I was still willing to negotiate to a certain degree.

In the end, the most important matter was that the warrior had to be willing to work for me, and they had to be someone I wanted to work with as well.

It was definitely going to be difficult, and there was also no guarantee that the individual would even agree to my offer. A reasonable agreement had to be met, so a continental test was necessary.

In other words, I had to personally select those who fit my criteria, so I had no choice but to go for quantity over quality for now.

It was an extreme measure, but those who couldn’t meet my criteria in the preliminaries would be disqualified, and we would definitely find someone capable of pulling out the gray sword once we had disqualified those unqualified for the position.

'It's probably going to work.'

"The marketing was extremely effective, but I'm horrified at the thought that we're going to be separated again because of work," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"I'd like to keep working with you if possible, but… I don't have the luxury to do that… I really have many things to do, so I'll be spending time in Zone Five for the time being. I'll visit often, so don't worry too much, noona. I'll contact you every day, and I'll be coming and going half the time as well," I told her.

"You better keep that promise. I'm serious. I'm really exhausted lately. Troops from the joint training will arrive tomorrow, and dispatching them to each of the outposts is a lot of work. Ten copies of me aren't enough to handle the workload," she complained.

"Once this is over, let's go on a vacation somewhere and take a break," I suggested.

"I've been waiting for you to say that," she commented.

"Or do you want to take a break for like a week? I'll ask Miss Kim Mi-Young—"

"No… I actually feel nervous whenever I don't do work. I don't want everything I built to collapse just because I want to rest, so I don't feel comfortable just standing by and watching from the sidelines. If I had nothing to my name, I would've just cursed and let it collapse, but… I might lose too much if I became negligent," she interrupted.

'This girl… '

"My power, my man, and my money. I worked hard for them, so how can I give all of that up?" she questioned.

I respected her way of thinking, and I wanted to give her a thumbs-up.

"If that's all, I'll go back to work. You're going to head out as well, right?" she asked.

"Yeah, I need to start working," I replied.

"You sure there won't be any issues?" she asked.

“Probably not,” I answered.

‘It’s more like I only have a few problems.’

I didn’t have anything else to tell Lee Ji-Hye.

Jo Hye-Jin was still supporting me, and Jung Ha-Yan was still obedient. Actually, Han Sora and Jung Ha-Yan were immersed in research over there, so they were in the best position at the moment.

Kasugano Yuno was looking into the future for unknown variables, while Kim Hyun-Sung was starting to calm down, thanks to Jo Hye-Jin. I couldn’t tell if he was still suspicious of me, but I decided to keep an eye on him for now.

There was also a chance that he was just focused on the holy sword.

Lee Chang-Ryeol and Kim Ye-Ri were given separate tasks, while Elena, Sun Hee-Young, and Hwang Jung-Yeon were focused on administrative tasks in the guild, so the status quo was truly not that bad.

Hee-Ra noona, Dialugia, the Vatican, and the named adventurers all over the continent were doing their best in their daily lives while growing steadily.

The problem was the heavens, not the continent.

‘Why isn’t Benigoa answering?’

After the holy sword fabrication, I hadn’t received any feedback from her, which was a problem. I was getting kind of worried that she would backstab me, but…

‘She’s trustworthy… ’

Benigoa wouldn’t turn her back on me just because of that.

Her contract with Belial would also not allow her to end her relationship with me. I dealt with her advent myself, and it wasn’t like I borrowed her holy power, so she couldn’t use the *broke* card as an excuse for going off the grid.

I came up with many different assumptions, and that was when a thought popped into my head.

‘Is she being bullied by someone stronger than her up there?’

There was no proof, but it wasn’t completely unreasonable.

‘She didn’t get locked up somewhere, right? I hope I’m right.’

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1. Lee Ki-Young's point of view ☜

CHAPTER 604
THE DILEMMA OF A LIFETIME (2)

I didn't bother contacting Benigoa because I was sure she wouldn't agree with the idea of using Lucifer's sword, and I also didn't want to argue over something that had already happened.

In the end, I drank two Light Bomb Potions and started talking about the prophecy.

I had completely ignored the opinions of those above, so I thought I would get their feedback right away. However, the heavens were still silent, so I started to become a bit suspicious.

I didn't receive a quest, and there wasn't any reaction from Benigoa's statues.

I thought perhaps she had already acknowledged her incompetence and had decided to leave everything to me, but…

'That's absurd.'

I turned Lucifer's sword into the holy sword, so I figured that she would say something, regardless of whether it was positive or negative feedback.

'Maybe she's trying to clear things up with the others… '

I couldn't help but think of the possibility that they had decided to contact their higher-ups, as this was something they couldn't handle by themselves. If that weren't the case, my action might have simply rendered her speechless.

The scum Elune had messed up my plan, and Benigoa, as well as the others up there, would have to take responsibility for it. If she knew how to feel ashamed, she wouldn't criticize my actions.

However, I was actually leaning more on the assumption that Benigoa and the others were being punished by the higher-ups.

'It makes the most sense… '

I considered them CEOs of large companies, but they weren't omnipotent. Benigoa's higher-ups were definitely managing other dimensions, including Benigoa's dimension, which meant that my assumption had a high chance of being the truth.

In addition, a CEO couldn't really completely handle every single detail about how their company operated.

'Even Lucifer said that it was only recently that she became interested in this continent… '

The light was probably so busy that they hadn't been able to enjoy any free time, but what if a whistle blower had told them that Lucifer's sword had appeared on the continent that they allowed Benigoa to manage?

If I were wrong, they might have witnessed the shocking scene right as they examined the continent. If this assumption was correct, Benigoa probably had no time to handle the situation, and if the karma she had accumulated so far were revealed.

'Is she going to get punished?'

I wanted to know what was going on, but I had no choice but to trust Benigoa for now.

"Maybe I should visit the statue again…" I mumbled.

We had been working together for so long, so I didn't think it would hurt to ask how she was doing, so I thought that visiting her one more time before leaving wouldn't be a bad idea. If things went wrong up there, she could backstab me, so it was best to be prepared for it.

Father Basel found me while I was walking toward my destination, and I smiled when he ran toward me in a hurry.

"Father Lee Ki-Young!" Father Basel called out.

"Father Basel! So you were here. I was about to come and greet you," I said.

“You didn’t have to come here by yourself. If you had contacted me ahead of time, I would’ve come to you… You haven’t fully recovered, so let me support you,” he offered.

“*Hahaha*. I’m fine, Father Basel. I’m feeling great, and it’s all thanks to everyone’s prayers,” I said.

“*Hm*… that’s a relief. I’ve been feeling uncomfortable because I feel like you’ve been overdoing it recently,” he expressed.

“It’s all for the continent and for Goddess Benigoa. It’s tiring, yes, but I believe my efforts will be recognized someday,” I added.

“Goddess Benigoa will definitely recognize your efforts. How about we have a cup of tea?” he suggested.

“Unfortunately, I’m busy, so I have to return to Zone Five,” I declined.

“How about staying for a few days—”

“I’d like to stay here, but… I truly have a lot on my plate…” I interrupted.

“So you came here to greet Goddess Benigoa…” he commented.

‘You shouldn’t feel sad.’

“I’ll be visiting often, so you don’t have to be so sad, Father Basel,” I said.

“*Ah*, right… It can’t be helped,” he said.

“I just feel bad because I can’t completely focus on my work,” I told him.

“Don’t feel too bad, Father Lee Ki-Young. I know just how important your job is,” he said.

“I’ll visit exactly one week later, Father Basel,” I informed him.

“I’m looking forward to it. I hope I didn’t take too much of your time. Go on in. I’m sure Goddess Benigoa has been waiting for you,” he urged.

"Okay."

Father Basel looked like he was feeling better than before, but he still looked disappointed. I thought perhaps having a cup of tea with him wouldn't be so bad, but it meant spending half a day with him, so I had to decline his offer.

It had been a while since I spent time with him, so I thought I should make plans to spend time with him soon. If possible, I would love to invite Sister Jayna and Sister Helena as well.

'I'm busy, but… '

I had to spend time with them.

If I had believed that we would only grow further apart, I wouldn't have built a relationship with them in the first place. I noticed Father Basel feeling better thanks to the small talk we shared on our way to the statue, and I felt really relieved by the fact that the light wasn't hostile against me just yet.

'That would be problematic, after all.'

I wasn't sure about the other priests, but Father Basel and I had united in the name of faith, and even if Father Basel heard from the heavens that I was a fake follower, he would definitely consider it as a demon's whisper.

Benigoa and the others probably thought of me as a demon, but I was sure they were also aware that the Order of Benigoa and the Order of the other goddesses wouldn't have been established if it hadn't been for my actions.

I figured that was the reason they were friendly toward me. After all, the fate of the continent was in the hands of the light.

"I admit that I got a bit too carried away, so let's chat," I suggested.

I wasn't mad at her, but she had truly caused some issues, especially the issue of how she had enabled Elune to disrupt the plan.

'There are no issues between us, right? Actually, tell me exactly what's going on up there. I'm frustrated because you're not giving me any feedback.'

I waited for quite a while and stared at the statue quietly, but I didn't hear any response.

'So there's a problem up there.'

I had no idea what was going on, but Benigoa was definitely in a complicated situation at the moment, which made me convinced that my earlier assumption was right. The higher-ups had punished Benigoa and the other gods.

In the end, I smacked my lips out of pity and turned around to leave.

Shwaaa!

However, the statue suddenly emitted a dazzling light.

'What?'

I was startled to find a figure taking shape, but her figure wasn't Benigoa's usual figure. Her hair was braided and was sitting on one side of her shoulder, which made her look entirely different from the other gods.

I was dumbfounded because the figure was definitely not Benigoa.

'This is new.'

[Nice to meet you, Mr. Lee Ki-Young.]

'Ah… yes.'

I was kind of shy, but I was really curious as well. Where in the heavens did Benigoa, Lauren, and Varian go? Who was she, and why was she looking at me with such a friendly gaze?

'It doesn't look like she's trying to backstab me… Is she one of the higher-ups?'

[I'm not the type of higher-up you're thinking of, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. *Ah*, my apologies. I forgot to introduce myself. I didn't expect you to visit me first… Let me introduce myself. I'm Goddess Nellia, and I'll be managing this continent in Benigoa's place.]

'What?'

[Benigoa, Lauren, Varian, and the other gods are under investigation because we caught them involved in several incidents. The higher-ups believed a goddess was necessary to manage the continent during the investigation, and I've been chosen to take Benigoa's place. I know it's sudden, but I'm looking forward to working with you.]

'What did you say?'

[I'm sure you've been frustrated.]

'I was, but… So that's why you're here?'

[If it's my abilities you're worried about, you don't have to be worried. I'm not trying to brag, but my performance is at the top…]

'I understand. I'm sure they sent someone capable, but I'm not curious about your performance. I don't care about how well you did in your studies. What kind of investigation is Goddess Benigoa going through? And why did you appear? I was looking for Benigoa… '

[She was involved in many things, so I can't tell you all the details… I'm sure she's being investigated about her involvement in the issue you've been assuming. I know what you're worried about, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. However, we're not trying to change the continent's religion. However, the holy power Benigoa and the gods of the continent are receiving from their followers have been redirected toward me so that I can use them for the continent.]

'And then? Will there be a religious reformation? Are you going to get rid of all the religions on the continent, including the Order of the Benigoa? You'll probably create an incident where you'll have no choice but to get rid of all the religions… and when the order of Benigoa disappears from people's minds, you'll launch the order of Nellia and recruit the existing priests.'

[You're a quick learner. You're exactly as the higher-ups told me. If you'd like, you can create your own order 2,000 years later and manage this continent yourself… Of course, there are many conditions for that to happen, and the biggest condition would be Mr. Kim Hyun-Sung joining the order…]

I was surprised to find out that my assumption ended up becoming the truth.

'Wow… '

I was so shocked that I couldn't hear Nellia talking passionately about the merits, benefits, and conditions of joining them up above.

[This isn't the only thing we can guarantee. Whatever Lucifer offered…]

As expected, they knew that I had met Lucifer.

'She really must've been at the top of her class.'

It was a completely reasonable offer, which was different from Benigoa's offer.

She even presented me with detailed data, which made me feel like I was looking at a PowerPoint presentation of an employee of a large company who was trying to make me sign a contract to work with their company.

It seemed that she was taking this meeting seriously because her gaze was filled with a sense of responsibility.

Her offer wasn't that bad, and it was possible to get rid of the Order of Benigoa and then establish the Order of Nellia once everything was resolved. It was troublesome, and it would take some time. In addition, a religious war might even break out.

Anyway, I knew of many methods to do such a thing.

However, the issue was whether I should accept Nellia in Benigoa's place.

I had no idea what decision was the right decision.

Benigoa was incompetent, but she had been working hard to satisfy my needs.

The goddess before me seemed competent, but I had a feeling that we wouldn't get along.

I couldn't check her details using Mind's Eye, but that was what I felt.

Her manner of speech made it obvious that she was the type of goddess to do everything by the book. Honestly, I didn't have to worry about it, but I felt like she had presented me with only two choices.

[A. Abandon Benigoa.]

[B. Take Benigoa with you.]

I started tapping on my thigh.

'Ah… this is harder than I thought it would be.'

CHAPTER 605
THE DILEMMA OF A LIFETIME (3)

I honestly didn't think that it would be a problem. If one were to nitpick every little detail, Benigoa had the advantage in more ways than one. The biggest advantage she had was that it had been such a long time since we started working together.

She understood how I was taking care of the continent and was flexible when necessary. Of course, she was flexible because she had no other choice but to be flexible.

We had been through a lot, but everything had worked out perfectly in the end. If I were to choose based on relationships alone, I would definitely stand on Benigoa's side.

However, the moment I started thinking about it based on many other things, I couldn't help but start having doubts as well.

'Is working with Benigoa really the right thing to do?'

This line of work was so tough that I couldn't side with her just because we were close.

I still wasn't sure about Nellia's personality, but she looked pretty competent.

[If we use more than a certain amount of holy power to affect the continent, we'll notify you in advance. Additionally, I'd like to tell you ahead of time that if there's anything we can do or help you with, we'll do our best to support you. Of course, this…]

It broke my heart to know that Benigoa was in a difficult situation, but everything was her fault. In the end, it was Benigoa who had signed a contract with a demon, and it was also her fault for not noticing the fact that Lucifer had entered the continent.

'What kind of goddess signs a contract with a demon? Benigoa made her bed, so she

should lie in it.'

Benigoa had also broken too many rules, and if she were to be prosecuted about her bankruptcy, I wouldn't be able to protect her. She had also borrowed holy power from beings located in other dimensions.

Sure, Benigoa was open-minded, but Nellia was too competent.

'Has Benigoa finally been tainted by the darkness… '

The words I unknowingly mumbled to myself caused Nellia to answer immediately.

[We're checking. We can't tell you the details, but it's highly likely… The higher-ups reached that conclusion.]

'Whoo… '

[Mr. Lee Ki-Young, I understand that you're heartbroken because you've been working with Benigoa for a long time. However, I'm sure you'll forget about her in no time. No, I'll do my best so that you'll forget her.]

'I think a religious reformation will take a long time… '

Fortunately, the work itself wasn't that difficult.

The sad thing here was that I had to make sure that I was ready to say goodbye to Benigoa. This was the right choice for both Benigoa and me. I felt like I could hear her calling me Father Lee Ki-Young.

[An Unranked Forced Quest has been activated.]

[I-I'll repay you no matter what, Father Lee Ki-Young. You know… that I love you, right? Right? We're a good team. You're not going to abandon me, right? Right? (0/1)]

~

I could actually hear her.

'What the?'

[What?]

I unknowingly started looking around before staring at Nellia.

It seemed that she had no idea that Benigoa had just contacted me separately. I wasn't sure how Benigoa was contacting me. Perhaps she was discreetly calling me from a place similar to a prison cell. I wasn't sure what was going on, but unfortunately, I was too weak to save Benigoa from the clutches of darkness.

~

[A Forced Quest below your rank has been activated.]

[I-I'll give you everything… Everything you want, so please don't abandon me. *Heuk*… Father Lee Ki-Young, don't abandon me. I'll prepare everything that you want. (0/1)]

~

I was too weak to save her, but…

~

[A Forced Quest below your rank has been activated.]

[T-this won't be good for you either. I-If there's a precedent, it'll be problematic for you once you ascend here later… (0/1)]

~

I had to at least try.

How could I turn my back on her when we had made so many memories together? Bengioa and I were more than a goddess and a follower, and we understood each other better than anyone.

Benigoa's statue behind Nellia started crying.

Naturally, I started detesting Nellia's kind smile.

[If you don't like me, I can ask them to replace me with someone else, Mr. Lee Ki-

Young. However, I swear on my name that I will never disappoint you. If you believe me and give me any tasks, I'll fulfill them even if my body crumbles…]

'What I need is Goddess Benigoa.'

[What?]

'Now that I think about it, I don't understand what you're talking about. Do you really think that it makes sense to do things this way in the first place? I will only work with Goddess Benigoa.'

[*Ah…]*

'I understand why you want to investigate, but does it have to be done right now? I know that what she must have done was a bit excessive, but I was sure she had no choice but to do such things to protect the continent.

'She has consistently sacrificed herself for the continent. If the higher-ups believe that she has been tainted by darkness, they should purify that darkness… How come they're thinking of getting rid of her before trying to save her?

'Is that how things are done up there?'

[No, that's not what I meant… We're still investigating…]

Nellia knew that something had gone wrong because my reaction wasn't what she expected. She looked more shocked about the situation rather than thinking about how to continue this conversation, and I was sure my words struck her hard like a hammer.

I was sure she was worried about what I thought of the heavens up above, as the higher-ups were probably thinking about recruiting me.

'I'm sure you know the continent's current situation. Everyone needs to join hands and overcome this crisis. I don't really know what's going on up there, but I'm sure there's a power struggle up there.'

Give Benigoa back to me.

'Goddess Benigoa chose to give up many things for the continent. She gave up her pride,

belief, faith, and everything. She hadn't done anything for her own benefit alone.'

[There seems to be a misunderstanding, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. It's not because of a power struggle or factions… And if you look closely at Benigoa's holy power usage history, it's filled with things that have nothing to do with the continent's current situation…]

'I don't want to hear it. Please summon Goddess Benigoa.'

[Please think about it one more time…]

'What is there to think about? I'd like to speak with Goddess Benigoa… '

[Summoning Benigoa right now is difficult since they're currently investigating.]

'She hasn't been found guilty of anything yet. It's unreasonable to assume that she's guilty without thinking about the possibility of her being innocent.

'Does she even have a lawyer? As her follower, I'm worried about the possibility that the investigation is rigged… Whoo… '

[I'll make sure that she returns to her position once the investigation is over.]

'Why is she being detained when she's not even guilty? If there's something that needs investigation, she should do it while working for the continent. She should also be given the right to get a lawyer. That kind of treatment is just—I think the humans' way of handling situations like this is more rational than what you guys are doing up there.'

[You seem to have misunderstood something, Mr. Lee Ki-Young.]

'If you don't release Goddess Benigoa right now, I guarantee that it'll be difficult to convince me to cooperate with you. This isn't a threat, Miss Nellia. I know that as holy beings, your thoughts and mindsets are different from humans.

'I also know that you don't understand the things I'm saying. However, what you're doing is wrong. As a lowly being, even I think that the treatment you have given Benigoa is unreasonable.'

I genuinely expressed my disappointment, and I thought about how much Benigoa had to be struggling at the moment. Innocent tears started rolling down my face. As tears filled my eyes, Nellia nodded slowly.

Whoosh!

Benigoa appeared.

[Father Lee Ki-Young… Father Lee Ki-Youuung…!]

Benigoa ran into my arms and hugged me tightly, creating a touching scene. I had no idea exactly what kind of decision the higher-ups had made, but we managed to overcome this trial at the very least.

[Father Lee Ki-Youuung… *Heuuuung*… Father Lee Ki-Youuung… I believed in you… I did. I believed that you wouldn't abandon me…]

'There's no way… I can abandon you.'

I had no idea if it was because I had been brainwashing myself, but Benigoa looked kind of beautiful in my eyes. When I came back to my senses, I saw Nellia looking at me sadly.

'Has everything been resolved?'

[No, we simply obliged and released Benigoa and the other gods from detainment. There are still many charges under Benigoa's name. As for the investigation and punishment… it'll be determined through a trial and debate.]

'Thank you for your understanding, Miss Nellia.'

[It's nothing. I'm just delivering the news from the higher-ups. I'll visit you again soon, and with Benigoa, of course.]

[…]

[Goodbye. I'm looking forward to our next meeting, Mr. Lee Ki-Young.]

'I hope we meet under better circumstances.'

Nellia hid her presence as she nodded slowly.

Benigoa was just crying, and even though I wanted to ask her questions, I didn't know what to ask first. I felt anxious to see her so anxious and I wondered if I had

made the right decision in the dilemma of a lifetime earlier.

Benigoa was right when she mentioned the possibility of leaving a precedent.

In addition, I felt guilty as well.

It was clear that it was indeed impossible to predict the future. I thought taking Lucifer's side was the right decision, but I had decided to stand on the light's side if things went sideways.

Under the assumption that I would stay with Kim Hyun-Sung for a long time, it was highly likely that I might become a part of the light. In other words, it would be annoying if a different faction causes trouble for me.

'And that is why I have to be careful… '

If Benigoa was found guilty…

'Shit… my head hurts.'

I had to do some research at Zone Five and find the owner of the holy sword, and now, I had to clean up after Benigoa's mess. The first and second task was unlike the third task, but…

'I'm still pretending that I'm losing my memories, so if I lose consciousness randomly, Jonobono won't just stand by and watch.'

I was already getting a headache because of the work I had to do for the continent, so this was like a blow to the face. Benigoa must've realized that I was in a bad mood because I saw a ball of light reading my face.

[I'm sorry… I'm sorry, Father Lee Ki-Young.]

Shit.

"Lift your head, Goddess Benigoa. You're not guilty yet," I told her.

CHAPTER 606
THE DILEMMA OF A LIFETIME (4)

[Really?]

“Not yet. You’re not guilty yet… I’ll be heading to the site for now since the issue here has been resolved…” I said.

[D-Don’t go. Father Lee Ki-Young… don’t go. Why are you trying to leave? You need to stay here with me. What if I get taken away again for questioning?]

“Just tell them that you won’t say anything until your lawyer arrives, and I don’t think they’ll come back and take you away anytime soon.

”It’s already been reported to the higher-ups, and it’ll take them a while for them to organize the situation, so don’t worry and go back to work. You should know all of this by now. You were watching during the Ito Sota case,” I replied.

[You’re not trying to get rid of me, right?]

“Why would I abandon you at this point? We’re basically in the same boat. We can also contact each other even when we’re apart, so don’t worry. Anyway, I need to hurry and go back since I ended up spending a lot more time than I expected here,” I said.

I was worried when I saw just how anxious Benigoa was. I felt bad about saying this, but her expression made her look like a guilty criminal.

She wouldn’t make that expression unless something troubled her. It was ridiculous seeing her like that while enveloped in light, but I couldn’t really laugh at her.

Benigoa had to be really nervous about the silence between us because she continued talking.

[S-Still, can’t you stay with me a little longer? I also need to come up with a plan and discuss many things with you.]

“Then let me ask you a question. What did you do to cause all this?”

A part of me felt bad because I already knew that Lucifer’s holy sword was a problem, but…

‘Nellia hadn’t said anything about the holy sword, so it may not be the case… ’

If it were a problem, she would have said something about it.

I wasn’t sure, but the demon contract was probably the biggest problem.

‘That’s why you shouldn’t sign contracts with demons so easily.’

Benigoa looked slightly nervous at my question.

I urged her to answer, and she started talking cautiously.

[H-Honestly, the issue didn’t occur because of the magic sword.]

“Really?” I asked.

[Yeah… You’re not affiliated with us yet, and you’re a human doing work on the continent. We can’t use physical force on you, and the higher-ups are aware of that… Basically, it’s not your fault, and your close relationship to Belial and Lucifer won’t cause a problem either… Of course, if it becomes serious, they’ll call you a demon and will probably send a holy sword or a warrior…]

“What?” I questioned.

[That won’t happen! Who would see you as a demon?! We know that you’ll join us in the end, so don’t worry about that!]

‘…’

[You were tricked by Lucifer this time as well… so the problem is that…]

“Go on,” I told her.

[I did not notice…]

“That’s it?” I asked.

Of course, the second problem that occurred after that became a huge issue, but I was surprised by the fact that Benigoa’s punishment started in that manner.

‘Wow, those bastards are too much.’

The initial issue was that Benigoa didn’t catch on to the fact that Lucifer had encroached on the continent. She couldn’t possibly avoid taking responsibility for it, as she was the manager of the continent, but…

‘She shouldn’t be cornered like this. They probably wouldn’t have noticed it either if they were in her shoes. Unless they’re really high up in the rankings, can they even detect a being like Lucifer?’

I guarantee that even if Nellia were the continent’s manager, she would have also failed to notice Lucifer’s encroachment. If they were a normal demon, she would have noticed them, but we were talking about Lucifer here.

Even Lucifer said that she had come to the continent discreetly because she didn’t want to kick up a fuss, so it wasn’t strange that Benigoa hadn’t noticed her. No matter how much I thought about it, it wasn’t a matter of being competent or incompetent.

I wasn’t certain, but there was something really fishy about all this. Was Benigoa’s failure to detect Lucifer really enough for her to be prosecuted in such a manner?

‘I’m sure there’s internal strife up there, or they’re wary of another faction.’

I knew the beings above didn’t live all that differently from the humans, but the power structure up there had to be more bizarre than I thought.

I didn’t know what kind of enemies Benigoa had made, but if they were strong enough to make the inspection team of the heavens search the continent, it was safe to assume that she had made enemies out of powerful beings.

I couldn’t help but sigh because the situation was more complicated than I thought. It could also get even worse. In the worst-case scenario, I could just toss the issues of the continent over to them and take Benigoa with me to Lucifer.

“Who have you made enemies with?” I asked.

[I-I… don't have any enemies… I get along with everyone.]

'That's what you think.'

I wanted to go up there myself. I thought it would be better to talk to Varian or Lauren because if there really were an enemy, they probably knew them. This was no ordinary matter, so I was having all sorts of thoughts as I bit my lips.

"Those bastards are too much…" I commented.

[I knew it… I knew you would say something like that. People tend to take breaks while working… Don't you agree?]

"…"

Benigoa's relieved face bothered me.

[I reported kind of late because I was taking a break… It's because of that… that it became kind of problematic.]

"That can't be it," I said, but my assumption wasn't wrong.

'She didn't contact me.'

The moment I obtained Lucifer's holy sword and the moment the holy sword dropped from the sky, I didn't receive a separate call from Benigoa.

I tapped my thigh with my finger while feeling nervous. It was strange how I didn't receive any calls from Benigoa, even though the incident could cause a lot of trouble on the continent.

Benigoa was bankrupt during the 27th Legion incident, so it wasn't strange that she hadn't been able to contact me. However, she managed to contact me during the Belial incident and during the Museum incident.

Those incidents weren't isolated incidents. Benigoa would always talk to me whenever I made contact with mythical beings, so why did she not contact me this time?

'Shit… she didn't know. No, that can't be. Wasn't it almost over forty-eight hours? How

could she not know?'

Where in the world was Benigoa, and what the hell had she been doing for forty hours? What was this goddess doing from when the holy sword dropped from the sky and landed on the continent to the Vatican making an official announcement?

It would have been weird if it hadn't become an issue.

"So, how long was your break this time?" I asked with a trembling voice.

Benigoa definitely noticed my trembling voice.

[I'm not sure… It's a bit longer this time… About forty hours b-based on human time… Something like that…]

'Faction, my ass… Damn it.'

The blow was so devastating that it was as powerful as a guillotine, and if I were to exaggerate a bit, it was even more devastating than the time when Kim Hyun-Sung was beating me up while I was in my Doom Ki-Young form.

'Crazy… '

I was furious, but I had no idea what to say upon seeing Benigoa's nervous face.

I unknowingly thought that perhaps I should have just started working with Nellia. It just didn't make sense. She had failed to notice Lucifer's encroachment on the continent, and it wasn't really that strange, but…

'You're really… Damn it… '

[O-Obviously, I wasn't just taking a break. I-I was kind of busy taking care of many different issues as well, and as I mentioned last time, I had a lot on my plate… It's true that I overlooked it, but it's really not what you think, Father Lee Ki-Young. I-I'm just really exhausted lately. Many things happened… and there was that incident with Elune… I was getting really worried, and I'm really exhausted mentally… that must be why I haven't been able to focus on my work.]

"But still…" I said.

[Anyway, that's where the problem started. The problems I've been handling by myself were made public after that… Of course, I'm not denying the fact that it was my fault, but… I feel a bit wronged…]

"No, you shouldn't feel wronged because it's your fault." I pointed out.

[Still… you're not going to abandon me, right?]

If I could, I would sell her off right away.

[T-The demon contract incident became… the biggest problem.]

'I don't know anything about that.'

[You're not just going to leave like this, are you? Y-Y-You're the one who forced me to sign it.]

'When did I do that?'

[You said that you'd be the witness. You're not going to let it end like this, are you? You're the one who told me to sign it. You're not going to throw me away like I'm nothing, are you? I have no one else to rely on but you. You can't abandon me. Our destinies are tied together.]

I honestly wanted to run away, but Benigoa was right.

'Our destinies are tied together.'

I couldn't leave her, even if I wanted to.

I became a witness to her contract with Belial, as I didn't really have a choice back then. Of course, the issues would be resolved if she were to take the blame and spend tens of thousands of years in prison, but there was no way she would do something like that.

Even if she were to make that kind of decision, a different issue would surely appear.

'It can't be helped. I made the bed, so I should lie in it.'

I had to lie in it no matter what.

I walked away silently.

Benigoa grabbed my pants and held me back.

'Just how much is she going to embarrass herself?' I inwardly lampooned, but I stopped walking away.

[*Heuuuung*… Don't leave! Don't abandon me! Father Lee Ki-Young…]

"I'm not abandoning you, so don't worry. I'm leaving because I'm actually busy. As soon as I leave, send me the details of the investigation. I want all of it, including the exact details of the charges.

"I want you to send me the history of your holy power usage as well. I need to see exactly what kind of crimes they're charging you with so I can come up with a plan," I ordered.

[Father Lee Ki-Youuung…]

"And I'm warning you—you better not think about playing any tricks. You must tell me everything. I also want you to send me Elune's holy power usage history. You must do it," I added.

[Okay. I-I'll do my best to send whatever you need to me. Thank you… Thank you so much… I'm so lucky to have met you, Father Lee Ki-Young… I really think that Altanus assigned you to me… If it weren't for you, I really wouldn't have made it this far. You know how much I love and cherish you, right?]

"…"

[Thank you so much. So… don't abandon me. Let's continue working together even after you join us… okay?]

"Just work on earning more holy power. You said you'd fulfill my requests, right?" I reminded her.

[*Huh?*]

"You promised," I said.

[*Ah…* Yeah… I-I did. I-I'll do that. I-I'll get to work, then. Good luck, lovely Father Lee Ki-Young!]

I frowned because I wasn't exactly happy about her cheer, but I had to bite my lips and endure it.

My heart of an investor was urging me to earn money elsewhere after suffering a loss here. The holy sword and Zone Five… just one of them was enough, but the result had to be great. Personally, I thought that the former would give me what I wanted first, but the latter gave me the results that I needed, which was a welcome surprise.

It hadn't been that long since I started my research. Perhaps it was because I chose the Bio Alchemy Summoner as my second job, but I started making rapid progress on the chimera research.

'At this rate, perhaps I might be able to create a homunculus soon.'

I wasn't really the type to get excited about counting the chickens before they hatched, but my mood improved as I thought about the future.

CHAPTER 607
MAKING AN ANGEL (1)

The process of finding the owner of the holy sword was going smoothly. Things weren't progressing as fast as I expected, but the users of Benigoa Net were enthusiastic about it. I wasn't exactly satisfied with how I wrapped things up, but I managed to laugh it off.

The people who passed the trial set up by the Vatican gathered from all over to move to where the holy sword was located. Griffons could be seen in the skies every day as we were trying to find the chosen warrior as soon as possible.

As promised, the entire process was broadcast live to everyone on the continent through the Goddess' Hand Mirrors. The broadcast reached the highest number of viewers out of every broadcast so far, and it wasn't really strange because even I found it entertaining as well.

The entire continent was clearly interested as the test that was held day and night became some kind of a specialty of the capital. However, it seemed that our broadcast wasn't enough, as a strange group had appeared.

They were streamers broadcasting their own thoughts using the Goddess' Hand Mirrors.

There were many different opinions, and I even saw quite a few hot topics such as "you should pay attention to these rookies," "an extremely talented individual from x region, "a swordsman from the North is on a roll," "he's really strong," "I've been observing him since the prelims, and I think he's worthy of becoming the holy sword's owner."

People took advantage of the momentum, and a special program was even created called—*Who's the Chosen Warrior?* The program took off, and it was all about interviewing the rookies aspiring to become the chosen warrior.

There was even this certain tear-jerking interview with a former peasant boy aspiring to be a swordsman. Everyone had their own stories to tell, and those with

clear goals and beliefs became really popular.

Quite a few rookies said that I was their role model, and it was pretty nice since my face kept on popping up all over the various media outlets. It was strange, to be honest, but I was benefiting from it. Of course, I wasn't earning any money.

Hidden gems from all over the continent were unearthed.

I was managing the continent, but I wouldn't have been able to find those hidden gems if it hadn't been for the Chosen Warrior Selection. Honestly, things were going on a completely different path from what I initially expected, but this big event was giving me strength in a different way.

A shepherd girl from a village in the mountains with an innate talent for taming appeared, and there was also a boy from a rural village who showed talent in both swordsmanship and magic, just like Magic Swordsman Jung Jin-Ho.

Kim Hyun-Sung was overjoyed to see such hidden gems. He had been seeing talented people whom he had never seen in his previous life, so he was obviously enjoying this. I even heard him say that he wanted to recruit them himself.

It was unfortunate that such talented people ended up being eliminated in the final trial, but the silver lining here was the fact that the major guilds and even nations reached out to them to recruit them to their ranks.

The rookies accepted their offers, of course, and they were naturally shocked to receive such offers. There was even a suggestion about how guilds should hold an audition across the continent.

'There's a reason why programs like this are successful on Earth.'

The rookies accepted the contract, and the guilds were training combatants they could use for free since they were giving them their full support.

Meanwhile, the troops from the joint training ground were assigned to each of the sites, and their brutal training immediately started. The training was going so well that I knew Kim Hyun-Sung and Jo Hye-Jin had to have done their job pretty well.

I was so happy that I had abandoned the recent image I had been maintaining and smiled at Kim Hyun-Sung warmly. Of course, we focused on our work once again. I

was still nervous about the reactionary incident, but thanks to Jo Hye-Jin's help, the restoration of Zone Five started gaining momentum.

It was the same for the three of us who stayed here.

"I can use this…" muttered Han Sora. She was looking at completely new creatures with their eyes closed in glass cases. "It's amazing. It's definitely…"

'It's not that amazing.'

It was surprising to Han Sora, but it wasn't for me.

'Yeah, I'm not that dumb.'

[Ramus Tucker's Introduction to Alchemy - Epic Rank - Alchemist Exclusive]

[Ramus Tucker, the great alchemist, is one of the greatest alchemists of his time. He was part of the Republic's military alchemists and had a reputation as the leader in the field of bio transmutation and potion synthesis, but he was persecuted for some reason.]

'This is how I first started learning alchemy… If I can't do this much… '

It wasn't an exaggeration to say that my foundation was bio-transmutation. At the time, I did focus a little more on potion synthesis, but if I had grown a little more balanced, I could've been an expert in this field. I even created a unique job called Bioalchemist.

The lack of black magic knowledge was the reason I couldn't attempt to create a chimera, but Belial's gift completely resolved that issue. Like putting a puzzle together or building with legos, I looked at my hands with my mouth open when I succeeded in the experiment.

Chimeras on the continent were based on fusion, rearrangement, or creation of magic beasts. Generally, it was the work of removing body parts from monsters and putting them back together, but more specifically, the work required transplanting cells, organs of magic beasts or catalysts, which would become the core.

The basics weren't that difficult because it was no different from building a toy where one would remove a tiger's head and replace it with a goat's head.

Obviously, its survival was a completely different problem. I was sure that there would be side effects, even if it somehow survived. Some would become violent, and others would become listless.

Alchemy wasn't enough to bring such chimeras under control, and it was the reason bio-alchemy failed…

"Did you control it with black magic?" Han Sora asked.

"Something like that," I replied.

"It's not good for your body, though…" she commented.

"Can't you do it as well? I'm sure you can do it," I said.

"Of course, it's not completely impossible, but… creating a chimera is more difficult than controlling one, and as their rank increases, it becomes harder to control them…" she answered.

"That's for black mages. For me, it's the opposite," I told her.

"I'm jealous of your ability to be able to fuse and immediately control a chimera on your first try," she expressed.

"I need to create at least a Legendary-rank chimera," I said.

"…"

"It needs to be a legendary rank. You probably can't imagine the amount of catalyst I had to use. The quality of the base monster wasn't the greatest, but unimaginably high-quality catalysts were used. I used dozens of Legendary catalysts. I fused them without much thought, but…" I paused.

"Wouldn't it be best to fuse monsters that have some similarities? If the sequence is ruined, I think the probability of success will decrease," she suggested.

"*Hm…*"

"How many are you planning on making?" she asked.

“I’m not sure. I’m planning on making them continuously. Since I have somewhat of an outline, I guess we can say that this is the beginning,” I answered.

“But… is this really okay?” she asked.

“What do you mean?” I questioned.

“Well… using a chimera in your current position… don’t you think… it’ll gain attention?” she mumbled.

“Does this look like *that* kind of chimera to you?” I asked.

It definitely didn’t look like a vicious chimera. It looked like an angel we often heard in stories. I used Salit’s hide and skin to create the foundation of its exterior before covering it with another layer of skin.

I attached eight wings to it, and each wing belonged to rare monsters, so I was sure that it could fly as well. I worked on the muscles on its wings and changed their colors to white, so it definitely looked like an angel.

Its face looked pretty alien, but I used the eyes of the basilisk and made sure that it would look as holy as possible. A true angel didn’t look like a human, so it was only natural that it looked alien.

I used a ton of money just to come up with the prototype, but it was all worth it. It could paralyze targets and emit lightning current from its eyes. Its wings also meant that it would be able to counter those *pigeons*.

My favorite part was the fact that it could emit light.

“It can even emit light. Look,” I told her.

“…”

“It was really hard to find that,” I added.

I wasn’t sure if there were even monsters that could emit light from their bodies, but I eventually found out that they existed after extensive research.

“There are quite a few fish species in the South, and one of them uses light to lure

humans and other monsters.

”It’s like an anglerfish because it can emit light from its head. I used that part of their body to create a catalyst, and then I transplanted it into this guy,” I said.

‘It took a really long time—like it must have been the longest part of the entire process.’

“It’s not that great, but it does have a slight charm effect. Those without magic resistance will be charmed the moment they see its light. Of course, its overall appearance looks out of this world, but it should be fine.

“Anyway, let me ask you once more: does this really look like a chimera?” I asked.

“*Ah*… Well… it doesn’t look like a chimera. An angel… It looks like an angel,” Han Sora replied.

“Right?” I asked with a smile.

“Yes.”

“I’m planning on putting in more work to create about six units. I’ll try to focus on its features if possible. I think it’ll be more effective if they have a leader among them rather than me controlling them,” I said.

“*Ah…*”

“The number 666 has been on my mind lately… It might be a bit too much for me, but I want to get as close to that number as possible. I’m thinking about creating another unit right now, so please watch closely since I want you to create them with me,” I instructed.

“What? Together?” she asked.

“Yes. You’re an honor student, after all. I’m certain you’ll be able to understand it right away since you’ve received excellent grades in alchemy,” I replied.

Han Sora was definitely going to be helpful. She hadn’t been able to show her full potential because she was in Jung Ha-Yan’s shadows, but she was a top-tier mage.

This wouldn’t have been the case if she were an ordinary mage, but her black mage

job helped her rise to her current position.

I felt relieved about teaching her alchemy ahead of time, and if it hadn't been for her, I would've refused to leave this laboratory and wouldn't have been able to enjoy simple hobbies. However, Han Sora immediately looked nervous about it…

"Nothing will happen, so don't worry too much," I assured her.

"Will… Is Miss Jung Ha-Yan going to be fine with it?" Han Sora asked.

"It'll be fine. Aren't you close with Ha-Yan now? No need to worry. Don't think about anything else, and just focus on your work. *Ah*, I'll select a few people and send them your way, so please train them," I told her.

"…"

"Don't talk about black magic or whatever and talk about anti-hero or something like that. There must be darkness for there to be light. Say cliche lines like that. We're priests of darkness managed by the order. Something along those lines. Only those who understand darkness well can counter the darkness, do you understand?" I asked.

"But that's…" Han Sora paused.

"Yes?"

"Can't we do it with Miss Jung Ha-Yan?" she asked.

She looked desperate and frightened and looked as if she was going to cry at any moment. Honestly, I knew what she was scared of, but…

'She has something else she needs to take care of… '

I couldn't use three talented people for the same task, especially when we had an archmage with us.

Bang!

Someone banged on the door. The surprised Han Sora gasped and distanced herself from me as far as possible, but Jung Ha-Yan wasn't here for Han Sora.

“It’s not what you think. It’s not—”

“…”

“O-O-Oppa! The tamer, Alps, is taking her test today! I think they’re starting now!” Jung Ha-Yan yelled.

Jung Ha-Yan was also obsessed with the recent program on Benigoa Net.

CHAPTER 608
MAKING AN ANGEL (2)

"Really?" I asked.

"I really didn't think about anything. I didn't think about anything like that. Believe me. Please…" Han Sora begged.

'Please stop… '

"I-I-It's going to start in ten minutes. Let's go watch," Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

"Let's take a break, then. You should join us, Miss Sora," I suggested.

"*Huh? Ah*… S-Sure…" she replied.

It was a rare break for the three researchers stuck in this laboratory. Of course, we had been watching the program every day while munching on popcorn, and it was one of the simple joys that I had been enjoying every day.

To be honest, I didn't expect that Jung Ha-Yan would enjoy such a show. I wasn't sure if she was just pretending to like it because I liked it, but she looked like she was enjoying it.

Han Sora was also looking forward to watching the program, as she had been stuck in that depressing and dark room all day today.

I told them that we would take a break, and Han Sora immediately clapped in response.

Jung Ha-Yan ran toward the break room and told me that she would prepare everything. I also made sure that I would be able to instantly go back to work once we were done with our break.

It didn't take me that long to prepare everything. Anyway, Han Sora was still wary about many things, but nothing was going to happen—I was sure of it.

'Ha-Yan cherishes you a lot, so stop worrying.'

If Jung Ha-Yan were still hostile to Han Sora, she would have long been discovered as a cold corpse. Fortunately, Jung Ha-Yan didn't think of Han Sora as an uninvited guest.

She recognized her as a friend, which was a change that surprised me as well.

Of course, she still used Anemone's Eye whenever Han Sora and I were talking or whenever we were in the same room, but she had gotten lenient recently. It was probably because of the time they had been spending together and her growth.

However, Han Sora was still nervous around her…

"Don't… come near me… Sub Guild Master," Han Sora warned.

"What?"

"A few days ago, Miss Jung Ha-Yan asked if I was hurt anywhere… Please… please…" she begged.

"…"

"She also makes me do all the dangerous work in our research as if she wants me to get hurt…" she added.

"…"

She was still nervous, but it was a good thing that Jung Ha-Yan wasn't threatening her life anymore. I wanted to tell her that it was going to be fine, but I couldn't bring myself to say that.

I remained silent as if I had nothing else to say. I turned and saw that the seat next to Jung Ha-Yan was empty. She patted that seat, and I sat down next to her before noticing a popcorn a bit out of reach.

I sat here every day, but it felt strange to sit here today for some reason. I wondered if it was because of Han Sora's words. I turned to Han Sora and found her munching on the popcorn, reminding me of a pet.

"…"

'Wait, no, that's a bit too far.'

Anyway, Jung Ha-Yan definitely considered Han Sora as a close friend.

I had a feeling that I would get a headache if I thought about it more, so I shook my head and looked at the Goddess' Mirror. I decided to focus on the show for now, as I had been waiting for it for quite a while now.

'Alps.'

Alps was a talented individual and was a part of Lee Ki-Young's Top 100 Best Pick list— no, Top 14. Her rank was a bit low, as the limitations of her job were clear. It was a good thing that she was talented at swordsmanship, which made up for her job's limitations. If she chose swordsman as her main class, her rank would probably increase by ten.

I decided to give her additional points, as she was just a shepherd girl living deep in the mountains. In other words, there was no way she could have understood her own abilities in that kind of place.

In fact, she even joined the prelims with a dog, but she somehow captured the attention of the continent. She easily drove the dark energy away in the prelims, and she also left a good impression on the team mission that started afterward.

More importantly, her skills as a tamer were pretty impressive.

'A dog completely destroyed the stage.'

The dog she brought with her supplemented her swordsmanship.

Obviously, she experienced some hardships.

She lacked foundational knowledge, and her behavior also brought a lot of criticism from the public. They doubted if she could even become the chosen warrior. I was rooting for her, so I was trying to protect her.

However, it was clear that the criticisms were getting to her, as she was slowly losing her confidence. Fortunately, the comment of our kid, Kim Ye-Ri, who was a special

judge of the program, completely changed Alps.

- Alps, do you want to become a warrior?

- Yes.

- Then do your best. Try harder.

- Okay… *Heuk*… I will.

Just then, the Goddess' Mirror showed replays of a tear-jerking scene.

Kim Ye-Ri was just a kid, so I almost laughed when I saw her wearing heavy makeup while pretending as if she were charismatic.

Meanwhile, the crying Park Deok-Gu next to her made me want to applaud. I had already seen the scenes that were playing at the moment, but it still didn't fail to make me feel sad.

'I feel like the revolutionary siblings have a real talent for things like that… '

I didn't think it would be a bad idea to display scenes like that often.

- I… feel really bad and… I'm really embarrassed. I came because I thought I could do well, but… *Heuk*… I feel like you're really disappointed in me.

The interview was heartwarming as well.

I glanced to the side and saw Han Sora nodding. Jung Ha-Yan was smiling as well.

They continued showing Alps' past performances and interviews, and I was impressed by the editing that built up the mood, but no one wanted to watch things they had already seen.

I saw the girl smiling quietly as she appeared with her sheepdog.

[Mr. Ki-Young, it's starting.]

My Goddess' Hand Mirror vibrated. I looked down at it and saw that a message had come from Kim Hyun-Sung.

“W-Who is it?” Jung Ha-Yan asked.

“It’s Mr. Hyun-Sung. He was just letting me know that the show was starting,” I replied.

[I’m watching it now as well. Enjoy ^^]

Jung Ha-Yan leaned over to see if the message had truly come from Kim Hyun-Sung, but I couldn’t show her the screen, as the message log contained information about Kim Hyun-Sung’s past life. I even set up a password for my Goddess’ Hand Mirror, as I was afraid that Jung Ha-Yan might take a peek at it.

I turned the hand mirror away and placed it into my pocket.

Jung Ha-Yan looked slightly frustrated, but she didn’t say anything.

“It looks like the guild master is enjoying it as well.”

Han Sora played along in a natural manner. It seemed that her social skills were at max, as she instantly saw through what was going on and made the right comment to confirm that the message I had received just now was indeed from Kim Hyun-Sung.

‘Wow… great timing.’

I exclaimed to myself because of how naturally she joined the conversation, and her gaze telling me to say something was perfect as well.

Honestly, I didn’t think that it was necessary for me to explain myself to this extent, but her assistance came in perfectly that I started talking without realizing it. To be honest, I would benefit greatly later down the road if I were to take care of this issue right now.

“He’s usually busy, so he often doesn’t have time to watch it, but… I think he’s watching it with everyone else.”

“*Ah*…”

I was sure Kim Hyun-Sung had just discovered the existence of the show, and he had always been a fan of talents, so it wasn’t really strange that he was now keeping an eye on the show.

I was different from Kim Hyun-Sung in the sense that I only had to send talented people to the battlefield while he had to work with them on the battlefield. Of course, he was also interested in the lives of the continent's denizens.

He had truly gotten hooked on the show because he had been sending me messages like "I hope they'll make it," and "I hope they'll get chosen," along with a detailed reason as to why that particular individual would make it or get chosen.

It was unlike him, so I was quite surprised.

Personally, I enjoyed this side of him, but he seemed like he was watching the show that all of his classmates were watching so that he wouldn't get left out.

Whenever the Blue Guild members were busy talking about the show in the guild chat room, he would sometimes talk in the chat room as well, which was completely different from the Kim Hyun-Sung I knew. I wasn't sure if he was aware of it, but he was changing slowly but surely, starting from the smallest details.

'The changes are great, though… ''

It was a widely accepted theory that he had unknowingly been keeping his distance from other people because of the shock he had received when he had lost them in his past life. Now, I could tell that he was trying to take a step forward.

'Yeah, comrades are important, but I have to be the most important, Hyun-Sung.'

Normally, people like our Hyun-Sung would become even stronger for the sake of protecting someone or something.

I smiled in satisfaction to myself before turning to look at the screen.

Alps' interview coming to an end.

- I'll do my best to repay the support of everyone who believes in me. I'd like to thank Miss Kim Ye-Ri, who has been supporting me, even though she seemed cold at first impression. I also want to thank Mr. Park Deok-Gu for cheering me on and telling me that I can do it. Lastly, I'd like to thank Goddess Benigoa for giving me this chance and the denizens of the continent who are cheering me on.

'Go on. It's about time to pull out that sword, anyway.'

- I'm not sure if I'll be chosen by the holy sword, but… I'll do my best to meet your expectations.

'Doing your best isn't enough.'

She was saying that she was going to do her best, but her gaze showed a strong will that said she was going to pull it out no matter what. I could hear the viewers cheering, and I could also feel the thrilling atmosphere through the Goddess' Mirror.

- Hang in there, Alps!

- You're the only chosen warrior.

- Unni, you're so pretty!

Seeing her biting her lips and walking confidently while clenching her fists convinced me that she was going to achieve something great today. Just then, the sunlight shone on her face, and her dog barked, giving her strength.

'Let's go… Let's gooo!'

"I-I-I think she's going to make it. This time, I really think…" Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

"I have a… good feeling as well," I said.

"Can she pull it out?" she asked.

Alps started walking toward the holy sword with heavy footsteps. The people with ordinary talent had been eliminated at this point; the majority of them were bounced back after failing to overcome the demon's oppressive force.

However, Alps did her best to withstand it.

It was difficult, but she was moving one step at a time.

- *Woof! Woof!*

She was about to stop out of exhaustion, but her dog barked at her. No one complained about the barking dog. Everyone was cheering her on, and the moment her hand reached for the holy sword, the place was blanketed by silence.

'I think she's going to do it… She's really going to pull it!'

She was trembling, but she didn't immediately go flying. Her arms and hands were turning gray, but she endured it in an attempt to communicate with the holy sword.

'Let's go. Let's gooo!'

Unfortunately, it seemed that I had expected too much from her.

- *Bleeeeeeeh!*

The distressed Alps started retching, and she went beyond pallid, looking as if she had just seen every dirty thing in this world at once.

She couldn't overcome the holy sword's trial.

'Ah… '

Han Sora and Jung Ha-Yan went silent at the same time.

"…"

"…"

'Shit.'

"Let's just go and make those angels," I suggested.

"Okay," Han Sora replied.

"Please tell Miss Hee-Young to recruit her," I added.

"*Ah…* Okay, Sub Guild Master," she answered.

"You have work to do as well, Ha-Yan," I reminded her.

"Okay, o-o-oppa," Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

I would be lying if I said that I wasn't disappointed, but I was fine for now because she was only Rank 14. I still had Rank 13 on my list.

'I just need to be patient and wait a bit longer. I knew it wasn't going to end so soon, anyway.'

Afterward, Rank 13, Rank 12, and even Rank 5 and Rank 8 were eliminated, but I wasn't nervous. I knew that there were still many people who would participate, and nervousness wouldn't do me any good.

'Damn it… It's going to be fine. Holy Sword Coin… It'll definitely go to the moon. I just have to be patient. It'll definitely go to the moon… '

CHAPTER 609
MAKING AN ANGEL (3)

It was common knowledge to diversify one's portfolio when it came to investments. In other words, veteran investors would never invest all of their money in one company—no, even newbie investors knew better than to do that.

In my case, I invested both my time and money. Honestly, I didn't think that losing money wasn't that bad in my case. Well, technically, losing money was bad, but it wasn't as bad as wasting time.

I had already established a passive income stream, so I wasn't really that attached to money anymore, but time was different. I was only one person, and I had a lot of work to do. I was actually busier right now than I was when the Blue Guild was still growing.

Things were more chaotic at the moment compared to when Kim Hyu-Sung gave all the work to me. Right now, I was only in charge of three tasks, which was unlike back then, but those three tasks were incredibly important. I couldn't help but stress over them.

Anyway, out of the three things I decided to invest in; one of them was at least showing results, which was great. I was still hodling Holy Sword Coins. My Benigoa Coins were slowly becoming worthless, but the Chimera Coin's market sentiment was bullish.

The issue here was if my Chimera Coins could make up for the losses that I would incur from my Holy Sword Coins and Benigoa Coins.

'It'd be nice if it could, but… '

There was no way things would work out that well. Chimera Coin was relatively low risk, so even if it were to go to the moon, it wouldn't give me a ton of profit compared to the other coins. I was happy at the fact that at least one of the three was working out well, but it didn't mean that I could finally start relaxing.

'If those two coins plummet… '

The game would end there.

If I wanted to break even, I had to create at least 6,000 angels and three homunculi, which was obviously impossible. I would need to spend a ton of money and time on creating 666 units, not to mention 6,000 angels and three homunculi.

To make things worse, I had no idea how to create homunculus. In other words, I couldn't really do anything other than have faith and hodl.

'It's going to the moon. It's definitely going to the moon.'

I visited the Vatican from time to time, but I couldn't really do much. The holy sword wasn't responding to me either.

'It hasn't been two months yet… At this rate, it's definitely going to the moon.'

I had to focus on creating angels, but I unknowingly kept thinking about other things.

'Damn it, there's no point in thinking about this any longer. Let's just focus on my task.'

I shook my head and was about to officially start working…

"*Um…"* Han Sora suddenly said.

She had requested to go to a different workshop, so I had no idea when she came in here. She glanced at me as if she was curious about something, but I had an idea as to why she came here.

'She can't endure the curiosity.'

Han Sora had always been inquisitive about everything, even when she was still a trainee. I had told her ahead of time that I was going to create a named creature, so I was sure that she failed to reel in her curiosity.

'We're pretty similar to each other, but she has a lot more to learn.'

The only difference between us was that alchemy was my foundation while black magic was hers. However, she had a lot of knowledge in alchemy compared to

ordinary alchemists, and since this task required both alchemy and black magic, it wasn't strange that she got all curious about it.

I spoke happily as I thought about charging her for tuition.

"What are you curious about, Miss Han Sora?" I asked.

"It's nothing… I just wanted to see if you needed help with anything… You said… you were going to create a named creature today…" Han Sora replied.

"I'm currently in the process of making it… How are things on your side?" I asked.

"I'm doing my best, but I think it'll be helpful if you take a look… Would you like to come with me?" she asked.

"No, there's no need for me to do that. If you do it as I've instructed, there shouldn't be any problems, so please continue for now. And since you're already here, please help me later since I'm going to need help with this task…" I requested.

"Of course," she said.

Han Sora seemed embarrassed, so I decided to give her some confidence.

There was no need to hide it as well.

"I'm experiencing a lot of difficulties since I'm trying to give it character," I told her.

"*Huh?*"

"I'm talking about the named creature," I said.

"*Ah…* sure," she answered.

"…"

"…"

"Exactly which part… are you experiencing difficulties?" she asked.

"It's the process of giving its body, the base, something special. In adventurer terms…

it's the process of creating an attribute or a unique ability," I answered.

"*Ah…* '

"Honestly, we can already infer a lot of information from its base form. We still haven't decided on its name, but it has tough skin, alluring light, and eyes capable of paralyzing creatures… If I had to give it a rank, its attributes are close to Epic. There are differences between each being, but its attribute efficiency is low…

"High-quality named creatures are Legendary, but despite the rank; they aren't that strong. It'll be easier to understand if you think of this creature as the base form of angels with more emphasis on physical abilities and magic," I explained.

"I understand, Sub Guild Master," she said.

"The six beings that will be created into named creatures must have other attributes aside from its base form… *Ah!* You can come closer. Actually, let's just try making it right now since the mise en place is done," I suggested.

"Before that, can I ask you a question?" she asked.

"Of course," I answered.

"What kind of characteristics are you trying to give… and how is that possible?" Han Sora asked.

"I used the raid monsters we have encountered or the boss monsters in the dungeons we've conquered as the foundation of its base form," I said.

"…"

"I thought doing that would be the best in many ways since I experienced them myself, and most importantly, I'm used to handling their catalyst," I added.

"Did you include rare-ranked dungeons?" she asked.

"Yes," I said.

"I'm curious about how you're planning on resolving the issue about the quality of the catalyst… Do you have a solution?" she questioned.

She was definitely trying to learn because she was starting to ask more questions.

“That’s the part I’m worried about, but it’s not that difficult. I’m sure there are areas that are a bit more bothersome, but it’s something I need to deal with, so… Let me see. *Hmm,* mixing high-quality and low-quality catalysts is pretty common. For example, these types of items are difficult to use by themselves,” I answered.

I took out the alchemy materials I had prepared, and she nodded upon seeing them.

“World Tree Leaf?” Han Sora pointed out.

“That’s right. Actually, this material is considered a high-quality item, but… its usage has already been decided. It’s not easy to handle, so it’s impossible to use a chimera with it, which means that I have to do something else before I can use it.” I paused.

“You have to transform its properties,” she said.

“Correct and changing properties are the basics of alchemy. Of course, it’s no easy task with an item like this, but… that’s what job effects are for,” I told her.

The Alchemist of Light job had a hidden job effect that gave an additional success rate of at least two hundred percent.

Rather than continuing my explanation, I thought it would be best to show it to her, so I immediately put it in the purifier. I activated the magic circle, and the alchemy kit moved violently. Han Sora was staring at the scene with astonished eyes. She understood what was going on, but she was probably thinking that she couldn’t do all this by herself.

Of course, she wouldn’t be able to do what I had been doing, even if she had a Legendary job, as we had a completely different job. In other words, this was out of her league.

‘Still, she must be thinking that she’s not completely useless.’

It was a good mindset to have. She was probably thinking that there was a way for her to do something similar to this with her skills.

“The named creature with the World Tree Leaf as its foundation…” Han Sora muttered.

“No, I told you earlier, didn’t I? This is the catalyst that will become the foundation of the named creature,” I said.

“*Ah…*”

“I’m going to combine this thing with the World Tree Leaf, then I’m going to use it as the core of the named creature. I’m not sure if it’s just a coincidence, but the first few dungeons I had conquered were filled with plant-type monsters.

“I think they’re going to be compatible with the World Tree Leaf,” I said.

“*Ah…* I think I’ve read it in the dungeon journal. I’m sure…”

Fwooooosh…!

‘Ah, shit… it failed. How embarrassing.’

It failed, and I thought that it was all because something had gone awry in the purification process. I wasn’t really shocked because it happened often.

I turned around as if nothing had happened. I adjusted the ratio again and activated the magic circle once again. The alchemy kit shone in a dazzling light.

The two catalysts that looked unlikely to fuse like water and oil were intertwined, creating a beautiful sight.

The magic circle’s light intensified, and Han Sora had to have been aware that I had to focus a bit because she didn’t say anything.

Soon, the catalysts had melted and intertwined with each other.

“Can I help…” Han Sora asked cautiously.

“Yes, please help me. I did say that it’s difficult to do this by myself,” I replied.

The next step was to harden the liquid into a cube within a short period of time.

I poured the liquid into a mold and added a bunch of alchemy chemicals.

Sizzle!

I engraved the magic circle on the surface of the cube before it hardened, and then I poured my mana into it.

'Not bad.'

The process wasn't bad. The quality was good, and I couldn't find any flaws.

"Sub Guild Master…" Han Sora called out.

"You can insert it now. It should work, but there might be unknown side effects… so be careful," I warned.

The core was soon molded into one shape. The noticeable empty space in the middle is where the fragment I was holding with a pincer was going to be inserted. I got nervous. I didn't want to go back to square one due to unknown variables.

After all, I had already come this far.

"Please pour your mana into the magic circle," I ordered.

"Okay, Sub Guild Master."

I slowly approached the glass case covered with magic circles and inserted the fragment into it. There was a *clink* as it fused with the other ingredients and turned into a single core.

I smiled after seeing a flash of green light.

Of course, I still had a long way to go. I still had to prepare a body suitable for the core and see if there were other errors. There was also no guarantee that I would see the results I was expecting, but I was still happy.

"Wow…" Han Sora exclaimed in awe.

It was the first named creature.

The Alchemist of Light had just created his first named angel using the very first dungeon he had conquered after arriving at the continent.

The scenes where I made friends with my comrades and conquered the dungeon

suddenly flitted across my eyes.

I was staring at the very first angel of the Alchemist of the Light and the very first version of the Alchemist of Light's angels.

'I wonder if the Holy Sword Coin will actually go to the moon.'

For now, I decided to wait and see before creating another one.

I was convinced that I just had to wait a bit longer, and the Holy Sword Coin would definitely start mooning.

'Yeah, Let's wrap this up for now.'

CHAPTER 610
HOLY SWORD COIN (1)

The core we had just created for our very first angel was similar to the Garden of Horror's magic core, and it was a plant-type magic core as well. It was capable of controlling shrubbery, flowers, and vines. It was unique in a way that it could use spores to attack and that it had a large amount of mana thanks to the World Tree Leaf's effect.

I worked on its outer appearance as well. I used the same catalyst for the majority of its body, and I granted it a firm skin using the same material that made up its core. I could have used Salit's skin, but I didn't use that, as I didn't want it to have the tough skin attribute. It would be a rearguard, so it was fine for it to be a not-so-fragile glass cannon.

I used more ingredients to create its body compared to its core. In addition to using a catalyst I had obtained from the Garden of Horror, I also used a dryad's catalyst, which was rare here but common in the West.

Time went by, and Jung Ha-Yan eventually joined us. Her task was more difficult than mine, but I got so engrossed in creating the chimeras that I gave her too much workload.

However, I wouldn't have done such a thing if Jung Ha-Yan couldn't keep up with me.

Jung Ha-Yan's job was to draw magic circles in the internal organs and the core. For the sake of magic efficiency, this part was necessary. It was a job that required top-notch attention to detail, and it was a job that made even me nervous.

However, Jung Ha-Yan was doing her job without much complaint.

The Chimera Coin's ceiling price was higher than I thought, so I decided to invest more into the Chimera Coin. This was one of the reasons why I was able to focus on this despite the fact that the chosen warrior candidates were still getting eliminated one after another.

Meanwhile, Benigoa finally gave me the holy power usage history and the things that were happening in the heavens. I was hoping for good news, but I obviously didn't receive any good news.

'Shit… Why did so much holy power go into the other dimensions? This is crazy… Shouldn't she be using them sparingly?'

Details of the holy power usage history were revealed, but this was probably only part of it. My jaw dropped upon seeing her holy power expenditure the moment she recovered from bankruptcy.

[An average-ranked Forced Quest has been activated.]

[T-There were many places that needed my help… I'm sorry, Father Lee Ki-Young… (0/1)]

'Wow… damn it. This is really shitty… You're poor, so why are you helping other poor people? What's the interest rate? When can you get back all of this?'

[It wasn't a loan. I-It was a donation. They came to me personally and asked for my help because they were desperate, so how could I reject them? At the time, I had more than enough holy power. And… t-they were my juniors, so I had to save face… They also said that they would pay me back when their situation got better, and they're trustworthy juniors. You can trust them. I'm sure they'll return all of it. Yeah… I'm sure they'll return it. I'm sure of it… (0/1)]

'Shit… This is really shitty.'

[You're not going to abandon me, right? Right? The atmosphere up here is… getting worse… The inspection team came yesterday as well to ask questions… I don't know when I'll get dragged to that room again… (0/1)]

[An epic-ranked Forced Quest has been activated.]

[Don't abandon me. Please… (0/1)]

[Reward: The Goddess' Love]

Benigoa was the biggest pushover among the gods and goddesses, and no one would disagree that the Benigoa Coin was on the verge of getting delisted. I was starting to

get a headache, and I couldn't help but think that I should start preparing for a trial.

Of course, I would still do my best to create these angels, as I knew better than anyone that this task had the highest chance of bringing me the results that I wanted.

'Just pretend she's not here. Don't think about getting help from Benigoa, Ki-Young. Shit, you won't get betrayed if you don't believe her in the first place.'

The Garden of Horror version was the result of me giving up my sleep, but of course, I couldn't just sit still just because I was done creating it. After I finished creating the first named creature, I started creating the second one.

This one was going to be the Rift Museum version. I knew it wasn't going to be easy, and there would be a lot of problems, but the progress was faster than I thought, so I nodded with satisfaction.

First off, the quality of the dungeon itself was high, so I didn't need to go through unnecessary steps, which was one of the reasons why the progress was swift.

I removed the unnecessary parts of the large dungeon core that was maintaining the Rift Museum and turned it into a catalyst, and by using the materials that made up the museum, I created a physical body.

My son, Max, also helped me, which was great.

However, there were problems.

Unlike the World Tree Leaf, the Rift Museum's dungeon core was a limited resource, and we couldn't extract more from it, as it was the lifeblood of the Rift Museum.

I got really focused on the task, as my mindset was that everything was over if I failed even once.

'This is all I have.'

The Rift Museum version, which seemed completely hopeless at first, was starting to gradually take shape. The Garden of Horror version was in charge of the rearguard, while the Rift Museum version was an all-rounder. To be exact, everything was random.

'This wasn't what I intended from the start… '

It was an unintentional effect because we made it from a chunk of the Rift Museum's dungeon core. We finally injected the combat program, and the dungeon core started spinning wildly as if there was an audience to watch it spin.

- I think the wheel is spinning, F-Father.

"You don't have to feel that embarrassed, Max. You should be used to it by now. Just call me Dad…" I told him.

- O-Okay. As I informed you, the system was changed so that this creature can summon one Legendary-rank item when in battle. I think it'll be really good if we change the golems in the museum to this creature, too… As expected, you're amazing, Father. How did you come up with this? We can even call this bio-golem a mini Rift Museum because it has a mobile Rift Museum.

"This is all thanks to you, Max. I wouldn't have been able to create this by myself. I'm sure Metel will be proud of you as well," I said.

- I hope so.

It wasn't my intention, but Max got even more motivated when I mentioned Metel's name.

Our work was moving along smoothly without many issues. Max was helping me, but I was still a Rank 4 Manager of the Rift Museum, so it wasn't that difficult for me to progress on my own.

The Rift Museum magic core we were creating would become the foundation of the chimera, so I had to use my head a bit, but it seemed that we would be able to see the birth of a high-quality chimera soon.

- Should we inject more battle programs?

"Of course, since it needs to be able to wield many different weapons. We should inject as many battle programs as possible. Aside from them, I think it's best if we give more emphasis to its basic functions… Let's try working on it together," I replied.

- Okay.

We experienced some difficulties trying to take chunks of the large dungeon core, but since we were both managers, it didn't take us long to create a program dedicated to its functions.

We had four creatures remaining. To be honest, the two named beings weren't complete. There were still details that needed more polishing, and we still hadn't tested them. Obviously, the Garden of Horror version was in a better state, but we truly didn't have enough time.

The two remaining named creatures were the tutorial dungeon version and the Cursed Shrine version, and those were the only two I had a clear idea of how to make them. I couldn't help but think of only making four, as I didn't have time, but…

'No, don't get soft-hearted. I have to make them no matter what since I don't know what will happen. I have to keep making them at least until the Holy Sword Coin goes to the moon.'

Based on the current situation, I needed to make more at all costs. I had another idea, which was Rimoura's Nest version. As for the other one, I was currently trying to come up with an idea for it.

For the tutorial dungeon version, I could approach it by using the Agwi and Salit a bit more and for the Cursed Shrine, I decided to give it a more unique look.

Aside from the brief breaks, I was constantly working.

"Are you tired, Max?" I asked.

- No, I-I'm fine, Father.

"You should take a break. Actually, let's take a break. It's been a while since we took a break. Let's go and watch that show on the Goddess' Mirror," I suggested.

It seemed Max wanted to take a break as well because his face brightened up when I told him that we would take a break.

Actually, we were working during our break time as well.

The coins that I had been faithfully hodling were plummeting one by one, so I couldn't enjoy watching that show. Max, Jung Ha-Yan, and Han Sora were enjoying it,

but I couldn't watch it without thinking about the paper loss.

- Who is today's protagonist?

"It's Gareth. He was a child soldier in the North. He's only 17 years old…" I replied.

He was kind-hearted and cute. Most importantly, he was a firm believer in Benigoa. He was a skilled swordsman, and even our Kim Hyun-Sung made this comment about him.

'He's going to become an even scarier swordsman with enough training.'

Kim Hyun-Sung had even mentioned that he wanted to train the young man.

The unrivaled talent Kim Ye-Ri even gave him a standing ovation.

I checked him with Mind's Eye and saw that his physical prowess was close to top-tier.

However, I wasn't all that excited because I didn't want to get disappointed, so I decided not to have any expectations at all. Wouldn't people get as numb as me upon seeing contestants vomiting and going crazy every time upon every attempt?

"They're going to get eliminated, anyway…" I commented.

-…

"The program itself is fun, so let's keep watching," I said.

- The atmosphere seems more serious than usual.

The audience members were nervous.

More importantly, they had high expectations for Gareth.

Gareth was also ranked 3 on my personal pick list.

They showed an edited version of Gareth's performance along with his story, which reduced many people to tears. He was a true believer, and despite the hardships he had experienced, he had never lost faith in the goddess.

'Damn… shows really are interesting.'

I wasn't really interested, but my heart skipped a beat upon hearing the epic background music.

'What if he really makes it this time?'

The butterflies in my stomach fluttered briefly at the thought.

Max was excited as well because he was watching while shaking his leg, and I could tell how excited he was because I had my hand on his small shoulder.

His excitement was contagious, and even Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora stared intently at the screen with their hands held together.

Han Sora had to be a fan of Gareth because she seemed a bit more interested than anyone else here.

Gareth performed a short prayer and reached out.

Booooooom!

He was sent flying the moment he touched the sword. To make matters worse, the power that the holy sword had emitted made things chaotic.

'What the… What's going on? I thought the Holy Sword Coin was going to the moon. It was supposed to take off… '

I had no idea what was going on, but one thing was for sure.

'Man… why are you so angry?'

The erect holy sword vibrated violently as if it were expressing its anger.

It was probably just me, but for some reason, it felt like the sword was looking at me.

CHAPTER 611
HOLY SWORD COIN (3)

[Benigoa's Trial, Temporarily Suspended. Where's the Owner of the Holy Sword? - Reporter Kim Sung-Kyeong of the Lindel Daily Report]

[There are growing concerns about the possibility that the prophecy might have been interpreted incorrectly. - Reporter Park Dan-Ji of the Opposition Daily Report]

[Spokesperson Sister Jayna says the test will continue. They're currently investigating the status of the holy sword… We will provide all support and effort so that we can continue the test as soon as possible… Omitted. - Vatican Daily Report]

[Gareth, a child soldier of the North, is fine physically, but he has issues mentally. What are the common symptoms experienced by the aspiring warriors who had taken the test? Why are they showing these symptoms? - Reporter Park Dan-Ji of the Opposition Daily Report]

[Father Basel is certain that the issue is caused by sinful people who touched the holy sword. Gareth, the child soldier, will be summoned within today and have the heretic inquisitors question him. - Reporter Kim Sung-Kyeong of the Lindel Daily Report]

[The news about Gareth, the child soldier, committing heinous acts during the war is causing a stir. Is Gareth, the child soldier who received a lot of love from fans because of his innocent look, actually a two-faced individual? - Mercenary Guild]

[Why did the holy sword reject Gareth, the child soldier? When strict evaluation is required for aspiring warriors. - Reporter Kim Sung-Kyeong of the Lindel Daily Report]

The newspaper spread out on the desk left a bitter taste in my mouth.

'Shit… '

"…"

'I thought it would go to the moon… '

"*Whoo…"*

I didn't expect that such an issue would pop out, and it was an issue that required my immediate attention, so I had to stop working at Zone Five. Of course, Han Sora remained and created normal creatures, but it was undeniable that the work had come to a full stop. I couldn't help but think that perhaps it was better to give up on the Holy Sword Coin.

'It'd be nice if I could give it up that easily, damn it.'

Giving up the holy sword wasn't an option.

The biggest issue here was the fact that the selection had come to a halt. The holy sword emitted a repulsive power, and they couldn't continue the tests. I was sure even the Vatican was stupefied by the holy sword's actions, and I started to feel desperate.

'What's wrong with it? What's the problem? I'm trying to find you an owner… Ugh… '

The majority of the warrior candidates were innocent people, but it didn't mean that we managed to exclude those with wicked personalities.

I was wrong to assume that the sword wouldn't be picky.

However, I was frustrated because it felt like I had set up a buffet with many different types of food so that it could eat whatever it wanted, but it wouldn't take a bite.

"Shit, man…" I couldn't help but curse because the coin's market sentiment had become bearish.

"What's wrong? Something not to your liking? It's best to control the media, right?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"No, there's no need to go that far. The mood isn't that bad, and I feel like the situation is improving. The people's reactions on Benigoa Net aren't bad either…" I replied.

"I was seriously surprised. I wonder if it's best to use Gareth as a scapegoat and let

the situation pass," she commented.

"No, noona. I think he'll be useful if we train him well… It'll be a waste to let him go. We also need manpower… Just announce that he had repented for his wrongful deeds in the battle and make the audience cry.

"Help him stage a comeback after you've announced that he's going to repent… If you manage the comments as well, this incident will quickly pass by," I ordered.

"I mean… that's true, but… man, he's an unlucky one. Who wouldn't act cruelly on the battlefield? They're attacking him for something so absurd. I think he was an unfortunate kid who was forced to join the war… At this rate, I feel like he's going to be labeled as a heretic," she said.

"You're right. Still, he's a devoted believer, so it's best to take care of him if possible. He said that he looked up to me the most. I think it's best if I meet him later, take a picture, spread it to the media, and calm down the public. The situation isn't bad, right?" I asked.

"It's not that much of an issue to handle it at the moment. Honestly, I don't think this incident is worth you rushing over here… There's a problem with that sword, right?" she questioned.

"Yeah. I think I need to take a look…" I answered.

"I'm not surprised there," she commented.

"Noona, you really have no interest in becoming the chosen warrior?" I asked.

"I don't. I just want to be behind the scenes and reap the benefits. What's the point of putting my hand on an unknown object whose functions and effects are unknown? You don't really mean it, right? You really want me to get that sword and go out and fight?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

I felt bad, but I didn't really mean it.

I brought that sword for the person capable of wielding it; I didn't want it to become a decoration.

"I knew it. Your face says it all… *Ah*, I think Father Basel is waiting, so let's have some

tea after we're done with our work. I know you're busy, but it's about time you take care of yourself. The atmosphere was really shitty last time because you just left. I mean, that old man really likes you…" she suggested.

"I was going to do that, anyway…" I told her.

"You should put it into practice, then. Do you really think I'm trying to manage my connections just because I'm bored? I know it's a bit bothersome, but we'll profit greatly later down the road."

Lee Ji-Hye was completely right.

"I know you're too busy to even see what's going on around you, but… Well, nagging you won't change anything. Your work *is* going well, right?" she questioned.

"Well, it's not *that* bad. If you ask me for the details, it's going along pretty smoothly… It's at least better than what's going on here. I should get going, though. My schedule will be pretty tight if I plan on talking with Father Basel today," I told her.

"I expected that, so I made preparations," she said.

"Thanks, noona."

I couldn't help but think about what I would do without Lee Ji-Hye. She was both meticulous and careful. She wasn't that powerful, but there was a reason she reached her current position. She prepared things ahead of time without me having to ask her, and not only that, she took care of me while taking care of her own work.

In other words, anyone would think that she was competent.

It was absurd to see that many people had cordoned the place off, but it wasn't really strange because of the repulsive power that the holy sword had emitted.

I noticed many broken things, and I figured that we should be thankful that no one got hurt. If a bigger incident had broken out, we would have had to use Gareth as a scapegoat.

"The damage is bigger than what's shown on the screen, right?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"Yeah. I'm actually impressed that no one died," I replied.

“For some reason, I knew an incident like this was going to break out, and that’s why I cast a protection spell. Don’t you find it interesting how that child soldier is still alive?

”It’s a good thing he landed on his back. If he had landed on his head, he would have died right there and then. He’s a pitiful child soldier who was basically forced into war, and even I don’t want him to meet such a pitiful end.”

‘Didn’t you just say that we should use him as a scapegoat?’

“You cast a protection spell, right? But…”

“Yeah, I don’t know why, but it destroyed my protection spell. It often runs rampant, but it does so within the confines of my protection spell, so I didn’t expect it to abruptly destroy my protection spell,” she said.

‘…’

“I have no idea what’s wrong with that sword. I’m sure you didn’t bring a defective sword… right?” she asked.

‘I’m also wondering whether it’s defective or not. Shit… ’

“I think it’s dissatisfied with something… I should start looking into it. So… you’re saying that it has calmed down, right?” I asked.

“Yes, it’s calm for now, and it calmed down the moment you arrived. While you weren’t here, it was constantly expressing its fury by banging on the protection spells we cast. I think it wants to say something.

”Should I ask a few priests to be there just in case?” she asked.

“It should be fine…” I replied.

“As long as you’re okay with it, then it’s fine, but… I won’t take responsibility if the sword sends you flying and your head cracks open,” she warned.

It’s true that I was nervous, but there shouldn’t be any major problems.

‘I think this stupid sword is protesting.’

It wanted something—I could feel it.

The sword was dissatisfied with what was happening around it, so it was behaving in a manner that showed its dissatisfaction. I wasn't certain, but it was highly likely.

There was also that time when I felt the sword staring at me through the Goddess' Hand Mirror. My conjecture had become more believable, as it immediately calmed down upon sensing my arrival.

Regardless, there had to be a reason behind its outburst.

'All right, damn it. What do you want? I'll give you whatever you want. You don't like rookies? You want someone who has the basics down?

'Are you dissatisfied because we've been bringing in rookies?' Experienced adventurers were difficult to control, but I was willing to compromise for the sword. *'Perhaps you prefer someone with a crappier personality? That's not it, right?'*

Had I misunderstood the sword when I thought that it would really love corrupting people? It would be a bit troublesome, but I was really willing to compromise to a certain extent.

'Let's pull ourselves together. At this rate, you and I will be in a bad situation. I'm sure you don't want to go back to Lucifer. No, even if you want to go back, at least play an active role here first. Why are you being so picky—'

Woong.

"Is that vibrating?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

I nodded because it was indeed vibrating slightly.

Wooong.

No, it wasn't vibrating slightly. It was quivering violently.

'What's wrong with you? Damn it, tell me.'

I approached it, and the vibration got stronger and stronger the closer I got to it. I nodded because the fact that it was reacting to me meant that it was willing to

negotiate with me.

'Okay, okay. You must have been having a hard time all this while, right? Tell me what you want; I'll listen and do it.'

Wooooong!

'Give me a hint or something about the criteria. Did you not like Gareth?'

Woong.

'Or do you just dislike the situation itself?'

Wooooong.

'Why are you acting like this? I'm trying to find you a good owner. Stop being so picky, my friend. I'm doing all this for you. It's not good to be picky. You can't just live off of meat alone, right? You need to eat veggies, and you need water as well. If you really don't like anyone, let's at least negotiate in a realistic manner.'

While I was grumbling to the sword, it suddenly made a loud rattling noise, even though my hands were a bit distant from the sword.

"What the… Shit. What's wrong with you?" I asked.

"…"

"…"

'Don't come out of there, man. Please don't. Why are you coming out all of a sudden?'

"What's going on? It's pulling itself out…" Lee Ji-Hye pointed.

I didn't have the luxury to answer her because I had to resolve the situation in front of me. I immediately made a move, as I had to force the sword back into the hole where it was trying to pull itself out.

"Go back in. Go back in, you bastard. I said go back in, damn it…" I cursed.

The situation was at its breaking point.

CHAPTER 612
PLUMMET (1)

I reacted in a hurry.

'Damn it, you bastard… '

I felt an indescribable longing for it as it unleashed a gray light. I wasn't certain, but I was convinced that it had chosen me as its owner. It was more convincing than saying that it had pulled itself out to stab me. Both Belial and Lucifer said that my soul was so disgusting that they felt close to me, and it seemed that the sword felt the same.

'I thought it likes innocent souls?'

Perhaps it had decided to give up on corrupting an innocent soul, as their soul could never be as corrupt as mine? Regardless of the reason, it was undeniable that the sword was drooling at me.

A weird scene unfolded—the sword was trying to pull itself out while I was trying to push it back.

'Shit.'

I couldn't help but frown, and I suddenly remembered Juliena.

Meanwhile, Lee Ji-Hye sarcastically said, "You're the Chosen One, oppa! *Wow*… your soul must be really pure… to think that the holy sword will react that way toward you."

'Noona, that's called irony.'

"You even asked me if I was interested in becoming the holy sword's owner, but it seems holiness recognizes holy. Looks like I'm not good enough to become the chosen warrior, and it makes sense because only a sincere and warm-hearted individual can become the chosen warrior of the holy sword," Lee Ji-Hye continued.

'You're not that different, noona. If I weren't here, it would've gone to you.'

"Can I record this? The chosen warrior is finally born. The media will go wild tomorrow. Hang in there. It's such an honor to see history unfolding with my own eyes," she added.

"Stop it… noona. I'm not in the mood to joke around right now. If I really become the warrior, the Holy Sword Coin's value will plummet. It's going to go down the mantle. What use is the owner of the sword when he doesn't know how to wield it?"I said.

"I don't think it'll be that bad," she commented.

It seemed like Lee Ji-Hye was delighted by the unfolding scene

Normally, I'd have a debate with her, but… this wasn't the time to do such a thing.

'Please don't come out, man. We aren't meant to be. There are so many other swordsmen out there, so why are you responding to an alchemist?'

Woong.

'You're saying it doesn't matter?'

Wooong.

'It does matter to me, so let's not do this. We'll… find the person you want. I'm kind of in a desperate situation right now, so let's push back our meeting since we have a lot of time, anyway. You heard what Lucifer said. I'll no longer be a mortal in two thousand years, and we can be together forever… '

Wooooong.

'You can't wait that long? Is that what you're saying?'

Wooooooooong.

The sword was now expressing its thoughts. It wasn't like I could hear it talking, but I could somewhat feel its emotions. I was starting to become suspicious if our souls were already connected. I was convinced that it was only a matter of time before I was forced to take it with me.

It wasn't like I didn't want to become the owner of such a powerful item. Actually, no one would refuse such a powerful sword, but…

'It's wielder should be someone who can actually use it.'

We needed someone who could use the sword efficiently and could maximize it.

This was a Mythical sword like Kim Hyun-Sung's Durandal, but it was actually a bit more powerful, so a rookie like me would definitely be unable to wield it properly.

I didn't want to talk badly about myself, but it was basically throwing pearls to swine.

More importantly…

We needed a strong warrior capable of standing next to Kim Hyun-Sung when it was time for us to face those pigeons and the Outer God.

Cha Hee-Ra was with us, but she was more like a solo player.

Jo Hye-Jin had become even stronger, but she still wasn't good enough to stand next to Kim Hyun-Sung. It was the same thing for Park Yeon-Joo, the leader of the Black Swan Guild. Actually, she was like a hidden trap card.

Letting an assassin work with Kim Hyun-Sung was a bit too much, which eliminated Kim Ye-Ri. I felt bad, but I didn't even need to talk about our *turtle-cum-pig.*

Anyway, the people I had just mentioned would definitely find it extremely difficult to keep up with Kim Hyun-Sung. In other words, no one could keep up with Kim Hyun-Sung at the moment.

The chosen warrior had to step up and stop the pigeon's invasion in the northwest region, and they had to fight with the regressor against the Outer God. They had to be able to respond to unexpected variables and make sacrifices when necessary

We definitely needed a warrior like that, based on Kim Hyun-Sung's description of just how powerful were our incoming enemies.

There was a reason why I was waiting for the Holy Sword Coin to go to the moon. The risk would be too big if we were to choose someone who had practically never

wielded a sword before and was just there to look good and…

'The side effects, damn it! The side effects!'

I didn't like the idea that it would gnaw away at its wielder's body. Most pain could be alleviated, but the pain that this sword would inflict on its wielder was a different type of pain.

Wooooooooong!

'It's not going to be that bad? Don't make me laugh. I'm going to live until I'm senile. Stop being so picky and just pick a decent person… '

Wooong!

'No, even if I live for a long time; it won't be called living if I'm in constant pain. I'll live until I'm senile, but I'm going to be healthy… '

Wooooooooong!

'It won't be good for you either if you keep acting like this. Think about it again carefully. Even Juliena is rotting in the storage room… If I start wielding you, you'll end up either in the storage room or in my room… '

Wooooooooooooong!!!

I trembled as the vibrations coming from the sword coursed through me. My Strength stats were low, so I couldn't stop the sword from pulling itself out.

We weren't getting anywhere, so I snapped my fingers.

Small tentacles emerged from the ground, and they wrapped themselves around the sword and me. The tentacles tried to drag the sword back into the ground, but the tentacles violently burst open.

I bit my lips—the sword was that desperate to be pulled out.

Wooooooooong!

Its outer appearance looked normal, but it was similar to the sword with six tongues

that Lucifer had shown me before. If I knew this would happen, I would've just brought that one with me. That one was…

'Shit, at least I can pull out its tongue. You can't even do anything. Who wields a sword in the modern age? I've been keeping Juliena because she has an auto-attack system… And what's the point of having a greenhorn as your owner? You'll just be used as a cane.'

Wooooooooooong!

'No, I'm not badmouthing you. I'm not trying to make you mad… I'm just saying you should think a bit more reasonably about this. Just wait ten years. I'll try to learn swordsmanship after I'm done with my work. If you just wait for me, it'll be great for both of us.'

More and more tentacles exploded; I added more tentacles, but it was clear that it was only a matter of time before it completely pulled itself out.

'Why are you being so clingy? I said I don't want to… I'll take care of you later. I'll even put in a good for you to Lucifer. So stop… Let's go back in, and we'll find a good owner for you. Let's stop this, okay?'

The tentacles could no longer endure take it.

Shwing!

The sword was finally out, and it emitted a gray light.

I somewhat gave up at the sight.

'Let's meet later! Later!'

The towering sword stopped moving.

"*Haa… haa… haa…*"

I was running out of breath because I had consumed a ton of mana and stamina within a short period of time. Sweat dripped down my chin as I turned to look at Lee Ji-Hye and asked, "It calmed down, right? *Haa…*"

“You’re looking at it with your own eyes. Are you sure you’ve convinced it? Did it tell you what it was going to do? The negotiation went well, right?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

It felt like the conversation didn’t really end properly, but…

“I-I think so…” I replied.

Wooong.

The sword vibrated briefly, but it didn’t seem like it was having irrelevant thoughts.

It didn’t sound like a positive or a negative expression, but it seemed that the sword had acquiesced. I stroked the decoration that was attached to the tip of the sword, and I felt it vibrate against my fingertips. The sword seemed like it wanted to express its anger at first, but it started to feel better the moment I started stroking it.

‘Good thinking. It’s better if you work with many different people first and then decide who you’re going to work with for the long term. It’s good to have experience. Just try out different people, and once you think it’s about time we work together, that’s when we’ll establish a 1,000-year contract.’

Woong.

‘Of course, it’s the same for me. Would you like it if I used you with another sword?’

Wooong.

‘It’s better if I try many different weapons first before settling on one. People actually tend to cheat when they fall in love at first sight. You need to experience a lot when you’re younger so that you won’t have such thoughts once you get older.’

I didn’t feel it vibrating anymore. It seemed like it was still dissatisfied about something, but the fact that it understood me was important. I felt like I shouldn’t stay here any longer because the sword looked as if it needed some alone time.

“What’s going on? Is that it?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“It’ll probably… remain calm for the time being. Let’s just leave it as is for today and start again tomorrow. This time, send me a report with more diversified types of people, and let’s add in a few of the participants who didn’t make it this far because

they were unlucky and got eliminated," I instructed.

"There were also quite a few participants who gave up in the middle because they got scared… Anyway, it shouldn't be that bad. However, you have to announce the Vatican's stance yourself since you're meeting Father Basel, anyway. *Ah*, I'm asking just to be safe, but you're certain there won't be any more accidents, right?" she asked.

"…"

I honestly couldn't guarantee it.

The holy sword seemed like it was going to bear with it for the time being, but no one knew when it would run rampant again. It was true that I was worried, but I nodded for now because it was better than letting the coin plummet to the mantle.

However, I had no choice but to grab my head in pain exactly thirty-five hours later.

- *Ah… ah.* We will now announce the birth of the chosen warrior to the people of the entire continent. To you, his face may seem familiar. If it's not too much trouble, please introduce yourself.

- First… I'd like to sincerely thank Father Lee Ki-Young and Father Basel for giving me this opportunity. This situation is a bit… sudden and shocking even for me, but… I'll do my best so that I won't disappoint you.

-…

- My name is… my name is Rafael.

CHAPTER 613
PLUMMET (2)

Teatime with Father Basel was unavoidable, and I had to explain what was going on, anyway, so it would be like hitting two birds with one stone. I gave him a random excuse about the holy world. Gareth managed to avoid the charges and return to his daily life.

I took a nap afterward and immediately started working upon waking up. The task for the Garden of Horror version was almost complete. As for the tutorial dungeon version, we used a catalyst made out of Agwis and Salit's core.

Physically, I was kind of tired, but I couldn't just stand around and relax. The fact that I hadn't made any achievements for a long time bothered me. Obviously, it wasn't like I didn't gain anything here.

The holy sword returned to its place, and my connection with the figures of the Vatican improved, but…

'If only that incident didn't break out… '

After rejecting Jung Ha-Yan's suggestion to sleep a little more, I worked without taking a break. Sister Jayna, the spokesperson of the Vatican, made a reasonable excuse on a live broadcast.

Afterward, the selection resumed, and the attention of many people turned to the holy sword once more.

The process was a lot smoother than I thought, but unlike those viewers, I didn't show much interest in the test because I didn't have the luxury of wasting time. Of course, I looked at the Goddess' Mirror whenever a participant I was interested in was taking the test, but I couldn't watch the test all day.

More importantly, I knew the warrior wasn't going to be chosen right away because the holy sword wasn't going to pick its owner easily. And that was when Jung Ha-Yan started shouting, which surprised me.

“O-Oppa! It’s here! I-It’s here! The warrior must’ve appeared. I-I-I think they’re pulling the sword now. They’re doing it now.”

“*Huh?*”

“H-Hurry. The chosen warrior is here! The chosen warrior!” Jung Ha-Yan shouted.

Naturally, I ditched my work and ran toward the Goddess’ Mirror.

The participant on the screen was really trying to pull the sword out, but he didn’t look all that different from the ones who had gotten eliminated.

The way he was standing in the center made him look like the protagonist of some epic novel. He had probably just turned twenty years old, and he had a baby face that made him look more like a boy than a man.

The participant was struggling as he took on the gray light head-on.

He looked exactly like I had imagined.

Under the gazes of many people, the participant pulled out the sword. As he took in the radiant light, he realized the responsibilities, burden, and power that came with it. The denizens called out the goddess’ name, and the priests prayed as they looked at him.

This was the scene I had envisioned.

- The holy sword… The holy sword is coming out!

- Goddess Benigoa has chosen him! Right now…

- *Wooooooooooo!!*

- Who is that? W-Who is he? Who the hell is he?

- He’s the chosen warrior. The chosen warrior…!

The voices of the audience that I heard through the Goddess’ Mirror were the perfect garnish.

'It's going to the moon! It's impossible to plummet now. It's gonna go to the moon no matter what!'

It was unexpected, but I was happy because I had been wanting to witness this sight.

I also liked the participant's young and innocent-looking face, and I also liked that he didn't seem corrupt. More importantly, what I liked most was that he had resolved my worries. It felt like my chronic heartburn finally went away.

'Kyah… looks like the sword has changed its mind. Going there was a game-changer. I knew it was better to talk things out. The holy sword and I understand each other, so how can I not like the demons?'

I wasn't sure why the holy sword had changed its mind, but I was happy at the fact that I managed to convince it. However, my joy lasted only for a moment. As usual, I checked the chosen warrior's status window, and what I saw made me bite my lips hard.

[Checking Rafael's status window.]

[Name - Rafael]

[Title - The Last Survivor of the Order]

'Ha… Shit… '

It was a trap card.

The Holy Sword Coin plummeted so hard that the graph shot straight down and reached the mantle.

"Seriously… Damn it… Why are you doing this to me?"

'The last survivor of the Order?'

How come he was here? There was no way I could forget the dirty demon contractors who had destroyed Zone Five. I thought we had taken care of them thoroughly, but it was clear that there was still a survivor.

To make matters worse, the survivor of the demon contractor's *Order* became the

chosen warrior. It was so ridiculous that I had no idea what to say.

I started walking away from Jung Ha-Yan, Max, and Han Sora who were glued to the screen while having many different thoughts.

'You dirty magic sword bastard… You did this on purpose, right? Right?'

The product of pitch-black darkness capable of unleashing horrible and disgusting magic caused me trouble in the end.

I was sure that it was trying to screw me over somehow rather than accepting what I had said. How could the dirty magic sword fail to see just what kind of person Rafael was?

The sword definitely chose Rafael because it knew of Rafael's identity. I wasn't sure whether it was simply trying to be hostile against me or if it was officially protesting, but it was undeniable that the holy sword had just pulled the rug under me.

- *Ah… ah.* We will now announce the birth of the chosen warrior to the people of the entire continent. To you, his face may seem familiar. If it's not too much trouble, please introduce yourself.

- First… I'd like to sincerely thank Father Lee Ki-Young and Father Basel for giving me this opportunity. This situation is a bit… sudden and shocking even for me, but… I'll do my best so that I won't disappoint you.

-…

- My name is… My name is Rafael. I'm not… knowledgeable in swordsmanship, but… I got used to it while taking the test and… also—actually, that's it from me.

The interview started, and the demon contractor succeeded in entering the heart of the Vatican under everyone's gazes.

I couldn't help but cackle because it was so absurd.

My madman-like cackle attracted Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora's gazes.

"…"

"…"

"*Um…* Sub Guild Master. Are you not going to visit the Vatican? I'm receiving messages that they want you to come quickly…" Han Sora said.

"…"

"…"

"*Whoo*… Please tell them I'll leave right away, but I might be a bit late. I want you to go with me, Ha-Yan," I instructed.

"O-Okay…" Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

"*Ah*, please contact Mr. Hyun-Sung as well. You must, actually… I think it's best if you summon all the guild members," I added.

"Okay," she answered.

'This is… really ridiculous.'

I was furious. I wasn't sure if it was because I was having a flashback of all the suffering I had experienced so far, but I wanted to flip everything over.

'What should I do about this?'

I had no choice but to open up several possibilities, as things weren't confirmed just yet.

First of all, my biggest concern was why that demon contractor had come here. His motive was obvious. It was possible that he was trying to find a new life after repenting, but the chance of that happening was extremely low.

I would actually call him a madman if that were his reason for coming here, so I assumed he had come here with an unwavering goal in mind and that unwavering goal was…

'Probably revenge.'

Rafael was here to avenge his comrades—to complete their mission and appease the

souls of his fallen comrades.

'Is he trying to threaten the light?'

I was sure that I wouldn't fall into danger anytime soon. The magic sword had chosen him, but he was still not ready to take on the light. I was sure he would work hard close to me so that he would be able to target my head anytime soon.

He definitely had his own plan as well, and I was convinced that it involved publicizing fabricating documents, saying that the world had to know the truth behind the continent or something.

I wonder what would have happened if I hadn't noticed that he was a reactionary through Mind's Eye?

'It would've been terrifying… '

He would have backstabbed me a few times until I died.

Unfortunately, he was the chosen warrior at the moment rather than a reactionary.

'How should I resolve this?' The solution was simple. *'I just have to kill him.'*

I could probably make it appear as if he was never chosen by the holy sword. My reputation would plummet, and people would badmouth me, but it was the best choice. It was a hundred times better to kill him right now than to leave him alone.

It was a tempting option, and it was enough to resolve all of my issues.

'Would it be better if I just wield the holy sword?'

It wasn't a bad option either, but the decision wasn't up to me, so it was out of the question.

However, I still had one last option.

'Help him grow… '

The last option was to become closer to Rafael. I could discreetly inform him that the reactionaries' information about me had been fabricated and that everything was

just a big misunderstanding. He had been brainwashed by them.

Of course, I couldn't say that directly to him, but there were ways to tell him indirectly.

Wouldn't his mind change the moment he saw the beloved honorary cardinal up close?

After I was done with that, I could just place him on the front line and let him die. It would be like killing the dog after the hunt was over, though.

I thought about it for a moment and felt like all three options weren't that bad. I liked the third option the most, but I couldn't really make a decision at the moment. The top priority here was to determine the kind of person Rafael was.

I left quickly while having many different thoughts. The quick-witted Jung Ha-Yan started channeling a certain spell. She definitely realized that I was in a bad mood because she kept glancing over at me, but she didn't stop channeling. Max and Han Sora also looked worried. They were smiling, but they didn't seem to be in a good mood.

I tapped my thigh again and displayed my usual business-like smile.

The spell was cast, and the scenery peeled away.

I saw someone standing in front of him, and I spoke to him with the same business-like smile I had just shown to Han Sora and Max.

"It's nice to meet you. I'm Lee Ki-Young."

"I-I'm Rafael."

CHAPTER 614
PLUMMET (3)

Rafael looked kind of nervous, no—he looked really nervous. He wasn't being hostile toward me. I couldn't really describe it in words, but it seemed like he was uncomfortable being around me. The figures of the Vatican acted as if his reaction was understandable, and even I didn't find the situation to be awkward because he reacted the same way ordinary people would react whenever they actually saw me. However…

'It's subtly different.'

I wasn't sure if others felt the same way, but I got a strong feeling that he was hiding his emotions. I wasn't sure if anger, awe, or suspicion was hidden behind that anxious face, but one thing I was sure of was that his feelings toward me weren't positive. I felt frustrated because I didn't know his exact intentions, but still…

'It's better than him.'

Rafael was undeniably more frustrated than I was. I was the employer, and he was the employee. Even if he were the chosen warrior, I had the power to decide if it would stay that way, so I was sure he was worried for many reasons. He had to think about what he was going to do once we discovered his identity and how he would resolve that crisis.

'He sure is gutsy.'

I didn't think it was by chance that he ended up here. I was sure he planned all this out, but of course, he probably didn't expect to be chosen by the holy sword, so in his eyes…

'Would this be considered as winning the lottery? Looks like you're about to go to the moon, you lucky bastard.'

I couldn't really do anything at the moment, as the coin I had been hodling had plummeted to the abyss. I approached him while smiling, and I thought it wouldn't

be a bad idea to act like my usual self.

I wanted to test the waters before officially analyzing him.

“Looks like I’m kind of late, but… I’m glad to meet you like this,” I said.

“No, it’s an honor for me, Father Lee Ki-Young. I-I’m very touched to be able to meet you like this, especially when I was only able to see you through the Goddess’ Mirror until now,” Rafael stuttered.

“I’m nothing special, so don’t be so nervous. It’s my honor to meet the chosen warrior who will save the continent. Of course, we’ll have to keep an eye on many things, but you’ve been chosen by the holy sword… I’m delighted to know that you’re a blessing to the continent. I’m sure Goddess Benigoa is happy as well,” I told him.

“I’m worried that… I won’t be able to meet Goddess Benigoa’s expectations. I’m… just…” he paused.

“…”

“It’s so sudden…” he continued.

“You don’t have to worry too much,” I reassured him.

“…”

“Many people, including the Vatican and the Continental Protection Management Committee, are ready to assist you… I’ll also do my best so that you can adapt to the new environment, Mr. Rafael,” I said.

I took a step forward and patted his shoulder, and he seemed wary of me.

He looked as if he had been cornered, and it was ridiculous how he had pulled the holy sword closer to his chest.

I didn’t react to his actions because he needed to know how much I had sacrificed for the continent, so I actually revealed a warm smile. I was being as friendly as possible and showed him the same kindness I had shown to the powerful figures of the continent.

It was an expression only a few people had the privilege to receive from me.

My smile had to have worked because he looked slightly flustered.

I was sure I was different from the image he had of me. Of course, I was repeatedly telling myself that I was acting, but seeing me acting this way in front of him probably gave him a different feeling than seeing me in the Goddess' Mirror.

I was Light Ki-Young, a pure, kind, and warm person. I was someone whom you would unknowingly extend your hand out for a handshake while smiling, and the best human among humans. The sunlight illuminated my face just in time.

"Thank… you," Rafael mumbled.

"I think it's best if we go somewhere else. I'm sure you're not used to this place, so I'd like to guide you myself… Is that okay, Sister Jayna?" I asked.

"Yes, of course, but…" Sister Jayna paused.

"*Ah*, does he have something else scheduled?" I asked.

"Yes. He'll be having a short interview for the media report. If you're uncomfortable, I can reschedule it," she suggested.

"No, it's okay since it's required. I'm sure everyone on the continent is really curious about the newly chosen warrior. Mostly regarding the things he'll do and his activities. *Ah!* Now that I think about it, how are things going with the thing I told you about last time?" I asked.

"*Ah,* you're talking about the support for the underprivileged," she said.

'Yeah, that. We talked about it last time.'

"We've been taking care of it like you asked, Father Lee Ki-Young," she informed.

'Good answer, Sister Jayna.'

"I'm sure there are many people worried about the present more than the threat in the far future. I'm sure many things are lacking, but if you can get it started soon…" I requested.

To prove that we weren't just having a random conversation, we started having a deep conversation about the topic. We wouldn't be talking like this if we truly had no intentions of carrying it out.

Obviously, Rafael had no choice but to listen to useless information. It felt like he had decided to come here after careful planning.

"Looks like I've been talking too much. I'm sorry for making you wait," I apologized.

"It's fine, Father Lee Ki-Young," Rafael replied.

"Since there's some time left until the interview, I think it's best if you take a look around the area nearby. You probably visited the Vatican once, but… there are spaces that haven't been revealed to the public," Sister Jayna suggested.

"Sure," he said.

"For example, you can visit that garden over there, and you probably haven't had the chance to see the place the priests of the Vatican use. Since you're a believer of Goddess Benigoa, I'm sure you're curious," I told him.

"I am," he said.

"If you go a little further this way, you'll see a university where apprentice priests are studying theology. On the other side, there's a shrine that only high priests are allowed to enter. Honestly, it'll take more than a day to see this place," I continued.

"I see…" he muttered.

"Since you don't have time today, I can only show you places near here, but if you have time tomorrow or the day after, I'd like to show you around little by little," I requested.

"You really don't need to—"

"I want to do it, and I'm also curious about you, Mr. Rafael," I said, interrupting him.

I smiled after thinking that it would be good to smile again. I was basically expressing with my entire body that I was being kind to him. Rafael seemed to have believed that I had dropped my guard down toward him because he started to relax.

Our conversation also got longer.

Honestly, our conversation afterward was a series of useless stories.

“Do you enjoy playing chess?”

I asked about his hobbies.

“If you don’t mind me asking, where are you from?”

I even did a simple census.

“When both my parents passed away… and I had no idea about what I should do, kind people took me in.”

He was probably talking about the demon contractors.

“They always taught me which path was the right path for the continent and what was truly right for our homes. I was able to make it this far because of their influence,” Rafael said.

I was even surprised because I felt like we were clicking. I figured that we had been walking for about twenty minutes now, and I looked up to find a small lake park.

Even I thought the park looked beautiful as the light shone down on it.

‘What should I do?’

It was to the point that I thought about pushing him to the bottom of the lake.

‘What the hell am I supposed to do?’

It was probably just my useless confidence speaking, but I had a feeling that I could use him as one of my chess pieces.

‘I think it’s possible. He still hasn’t pointed his sword at me.’

Rafael seemed to be a reasonable person, as he could have already charged toward me while foaming at the mouth with the intention of bringing me down with him to hell.

I was sure he wanted to stab me and throw me to the bottom of the lake.

Jung Ha-Yan and Park Lian were following us in the distance, so if he attempted to assassinate me, there was no guarantee that he would succeed, but… he didn't seem to be worried about that.

'So he wants more than just my death.'

He probably wanted to reveal the truth, clear the name of the Order who had been wrongfully punished, and have Lee Ki-Young be executed publicly. He needed time, and I needed time as well.

Right now, it was difficult to determine which was the right decision to make.

'I'll keep an eye on him.'

The Holy Sword Coin I was hodling had already plummeted to the mantle.

Someone once said that hodling was scientific, and I really couldn't tear the coin to pieces with my own hands. I was sure I'd get results if I just continued hodling, and the thought started to make waves in my head.

While I was setting the mood, Rafael had to have thought that I was going to say something serious because I noticed him looking at me.

"I feel like we made you carry a heavy burden… so that makes me feel uncomfortable," I told him.

"A heavy burden…" he repeated.

"It's not something ordinary people can take on with trivial determination. I don't know what you're thinking right now, but that's what this job entails.

"Goddess Benigoa sent that sword here for the chosen warrior who will wield it against the upcoming threat," I added.

"…"

"It's to fight, and that's probably the reason you were chosen by the sword of gray light. Glory isn't the only thing that follows power, especially in this kind of situation.

Responsibility and pain are inevitable, and that is exactly why it's a heavy burden," I explained.

"I… see…" Rafael mumbled.

"You will get hurt in many different ways, and you'll become exhausted. You will also have to put your life on the line… You may even have to sacrifice yourself for everything—for everything," I emphasized.

"…"

"There will come a time when you want to give up the sword. I can guarantee that you'll experience trials and hardships, but despite that, I'd like to tell you something," I said.

"Sure…" he said.

"Please don't give up the sword. Please stay with us… until the end for everyone living on the continent. Please… Please, I beg you," I added.

It was the perfect time to bow, and I openly showed him my sincere expression.

I emphasized that he had no choice but to play the tragic male protagonist who had to sacrifice himself, and I even cried while slowly lowering my head.

I was sure that he was really flustered because I had basically thrown my pride out the window to show him this side of myself, even though I was the so-called light of the continent.

As expected, Rafael had no idea what to do.

"Please," I repeated.

Anyone could tell he was acting like an adult…

CHAPTER 615
NEGATIVE PUBLIC OPINION (1)

“Please lift your head, Father Lee Ki-Young. There’s no need to—”

“Please,” I begged, interrupting Rafael.

I deeply bowed, and he looked uneasy at the sight. If necessary, I would have gone on my knees or lay flat on the ground. I was even willing to crawl between his legs, but…

‘I don’t need to go that far… ’

I was already making him feel flustered. I was sure he was determined to achieve his goal, but he looked kind of confused to see me acting out of what he thought was my character. Obviously, I didn’t think this was going to be enough to change his mind, but it didn’t matter, as all this was just a build-up for the bigger picture.

My plan was to show him that I wasn’t interested in fame, power, or money and that I was living only for the people of the continent.

I became curious about the kind of expression Rafael had right now.

I thought perhaps he would raise the holy sword high and decapitate me. In some ways, what I was doing was dangerous, but I had to do this to show that I wasn’t suspicious of him.

I could already predict his reaction, and as expected, he grabbed my shoulders.

‘Nice.’

“…”

“…”

“You don’t need to do this, Father Lee Ki-Young. Please lift your head,” Rafael said.

"…"

"You don't have to lower your head toward me. In many ways, it's so sudden, but I'm prepared for this. I'm not sure why… Goddess Benigoa chose me, but… I'll do my best to fulfill my role to the best of my abilities, so please lift your head," he continued.

"…"

"I-I should be the one asking for your help, as I'm still lacking in many things. You shouldn't be the one asking for my help…"

'Yeah, you should be the one asking.'

His stats were too low for him to be considered as the owner of the holy sword.

I lifted my head and showed him my relief. I saw him biting his lips. Did he think I was just acting? Honestly, it didn't really matter what he thought about me because he'd slowly change his mind.

'Are you sure you won't change even after seeing Kasugano Yuno?'

He would definitely be on a rollercoaster of emotions the moment he saw the future with Kasugano Yuno. I didn't think it was possible, but if Benigoa had enough holy power to spare, I would have told her to descend into her statue and tell everyone about what was going to happen to the continent in the future.

The majority of the Order's members believed that Benigoa's miracles were fake, but I couldn't help but wonder if Rafael would change his mind upon witnessing a miracle himself. There were many different methods and options to choose from.

More importantly, I believe there was a reason why the holy sword of gray light chose him. Even if the sword were trying to screw me over, it wouldn't hand itself over to someone it disliked. It probably felt that Rafael had a similar nature to it.

'A fence sitter.'

A person with neither a clear goal nor a path. They were the type of people with no established values and were easily swayed by the other people around them.

[Checking Rafael's Unique Habit.]

[Fence Sitter That's Not Easily Wavered.]

Rafael's unique habit sounded like a trap, but…

'That means he still wavers, right?'

He wasn't an opportunist, unlike his contemptuous fence sitter name. He was more like a neutralist or a prudentialist. He was the type of person who would take their sweet time choosing between white and black.

They would be really cautious in extending help to either side. In that sense, the fact that he held the same opinion as the demon contractors was…

'Understandable… I understand where they're coming from.'

The majority of their information was fabricated, but I had to admit that they were pretty good at making up stories. Prudentialists were easily swayed through instigation using fabrication information, and he was pretty young as well.

Of course, age didn't really matter when it came to something like this, but the younger ones were more susceptible to accepting the values of other people. One could easily understand it by thinking about how others could easily influence other people.

There was a reason the phrase—parents should pay attention to their children for the sake of their development—existed.

'I'm sure those demon contractors spoke many sweet words to him… and that's how he ended up being that way… He's really pitiful… Seriously.' Rafael simply wasn't in the proper environment. *'I'll take good care of you. Don't be suspicious of me, okay?'*

"Shall we… go back? I'm sorry… for the serious conversation. I feel like I burdened you a little too much from the start…" I said.

"Your words helped me a lot today. I understand very well that I shouldn't just be happy, flustered, or get drunk on useless emotions. If you hadn't talked to me about those today, I would've been in the midst of a sweet dream and wouldn't have been able to look at what matters," he explained.

'That's right.'

“You have no idea how relieved I am that you’re here, Father Lee Ki-Young. This place is completely new for me… and I have no one to rely on… And…” Rafael paused.

“I’m glad to hear that you’re relying on me,” I commented.

“*Ah*… that’s not what I meant… I’m sorry if I sounded arrogant,” he apologized.

“No, it’s fine. I believe that’s my role, and please speak to me comfortably. No need to be so formal. We’ll be seeing each other often, both publicly and privately,” I told him.

“…”

“…”

“Then… if you don’t mind, can I speak a bit casually?” he asked.

‘This guy.’

“Actually, forget what I said, Father Lee Ki-Young. I was speaking nonsense… I got too excited…” he mumbled.

I thought it wouldn’t be a bad idea to show him a warm smile because he had just told me that he wanted to get close to me. I thought it was best to act surprised, as if I were taken aback by his words.

“Go ahead. I think it’ll be more comfortable for me as well if you talk casually to me. Thank you for suggesting that first,” I said.

‘He’s more enthusiastic than I thought. Alright… so you want to be close to me, too, huh?’

“Can I call you Hyung, then…?” he asked cautiously.

‘This kid is pretty sociable.’

He was pretty quick at taking action. We continued talking in a friendly manner about many different topics. However, the timing of his action was a bit off, as we had just met each other, after all.

In other words, it became pretty clear that Rafael had just made a move that was out

of his character. He probably wanted to be someone capable of approaching others first without coming on too strongly.

It was a great move, as that kind of personality would create a comfortable environment for him. At first, he probably thought I was going to accept it, and even if I rejected it, it didn't really matter, as he had already achieved his goal, which was to show me that he was an open-minded individual.

Obviously, I didn't have a reason to reject it because I also had to get close to him.

I smiled, and Rafael definitely thought that he had made the right decision because he clenched his fists.

"Sure, call me whatever you want," I answered.

"Father Lee Ki-Young… I mean, hyung. Please speak casually," Rafael requested.

"I'm honestly not used to talking casually, so I'll gradually start doing it, but it probably won't take long. Today is a good day. We found a warrior chosen by the holy sword, and I gained a reliable younger brother… I'm happy," I told him.

'My plan is considered half-successful at this point.''

I told him that I would gradually talk to him casually, and it wasn't a rejection.

It seemed that he was aware of that as well.

"*Um…* hyung," he called out.

"Yes?" I replied.

"What should I do… from now on?" he asked.

'Yeah, I'm sure you're really curious about that.'

He still didn't have any authority to do something or take charge of something. He was currently in a stage where he could do whatever others wanted him to do. At this point, he probably thought that it would be great for him to take a bit of initiative.

The holy sword had chosen him, but he basically had zero foundation, so it was impossible for him to do anything. In addition, he truly had no clue where to go or which group he should become affiliated with.

“Well… once we’re done with the procedures here, you’ll have to decide where you’ll spend your time. You can go to the Vatican, the Blue Guild, or to the Continental Protection Management Committee.

”There’s also the Red Mercenary Guild and the Black Swan Guild, but if you don’t like those either, you can look into the groups and the guilds from other nations,” I replied.

‘You obviously won’t do that.’

“Going through the tutorial with the Guild Master of the Blue Guild and the powerful figures of the continent is the top priority, and I can also teach you various things during your downtime. Think of it as cultural studies since learning the basics never hurts. Have you really thought about where you want to go?” I asked.

“…”

Rafael probably thought that it was best to join a guild or a group in Lindel or the capital, for example, the Blue Guild or the Continental Protection Management Committee.

Among them…

‘Is the Blue Guild the best one?’

He would probably end up in many burdensome situations if he were to work closely with me. He probably thought that slowly building his foundation at his previous workplace was the best option. The Vatican wasn’t bad, but he wouldn’t be able to access a lot of information in the Vatican, so it wasn’t a great place to stay for him.

In my opinion, the closest place was the best option.

Of course, there would be physical threats, but they weren’t worthy of my worry. I wasn’t the weak Lee Ki-Young anymore, and Rafael wasn’t the type of person to do something so unreasonable.

“If you don’t mind me making a recommendation… I think it’s best if you join the Continental Protection Management Committee,” I suggested.

“…”

“You make time for the tutorials,” I added.

‘I can create the chimeras while he’s training… ’

“The place you’re affiliated with isn’t the most important. Even if you decide to join the Blue Guild… your stay at the site will be longer than your stay in Lindel. It’s also rare for the tutorial to take place in Lindel or the capital. It’s going to be uncomfortable, but it’s the most efficient way to grow stronger,” I continued.

“*Ah*…”

“Especially when you think about the effect you’ll have on the continent. I’m sure you’ll find it really difficult in the beginning, but I’m sure you’ll be able to help those in need both directly and indirectly once you’ve learned about various things.

”More importantly, you’ll be able to see the bigger picture. Of course, the most important fact is the fact that I will be able to help you myself…” I trailed off.

‘I’m sure you’d like to observe me from up close as well, right?’

Rafael thought positively about my suggestion, so perhaps he would end up joining the Continental Protection Management Committee. I nodded unknowingly, but as always, things didn’t go as smoothly as I thought they would go.

The members of the Blue Guild rejected the idea, and even Kim Hyun-Sung disliked it.

CHAPTER 616
NEGATIVE PUBLIC OPINION (2)

'Is there a reason to oppose this?'

I was surprised to see them being hostile to the chosen warrior. Benigoa had officially chosen Rafael as the chosen warrior. I really wanted to understand what they were talking about, but I simply couldn't comprehend the reason behind their objection.

Rafael was already done with all the interviews, and he had already met with Father Basel. We were also about to officially announce Rafael as the chosen warrior through the Goddess' Hand Mirrors.

This was probably when the members of the Blue Guild converged and gathered.

Sun Hee-Young and Hwang Jung-Yeon were busy with affairs related to the guild, so I hadn't really been able to see them. It was the same with Kim Hyun-Sung and Lee Chang-Ryeol.

I often met with the three revolutionary siblings, Park Deok-Gu, Kim Ye-Ri, and Ahn Ki-Mo, as they were done with their jobs now that the show was over.

Elena and Yoo Ah-Young were busy, but they still made time to meet us. The mood was great, even though it was a bit noisy, with so many people chattering to each other.

However, the mood quickly turned for the worse when I mentioned that I wanted Rafael to stand next to me by letting him join the Continental Protection Management Committee.

'...'

I was so surprised by the sudden change in the atmosphere, and it was strange how the quick-witted pig was so pushy about his opinion.

“I object. No matter what you say, I’m against it,” Park Deok-Gu said.

“…”

“I’m completely against it. I understand what you’re thinking, but unexpected situations exist. It’s true Goddess Benigoa had chosen him, but it doesn’t mean that he’s not a dangerous individual. We have to be extra careful this time, considering the incident that happened at Zone Five,” he explained.

“…”

“Of course I’m not saying that Rafael or Nabael fellow is a bad guy. It’s true that he’s someone we need to fight with, and I’m not really against helping him. However, we honestly don’t know anything about the guy. Before letting him stay by your side, I think it’s better to take our time to get to know him first,” he suggested.

“…”

“This is all for you, hyung-nim,” he added.

“Mr. Deok-Gu is right. I don’t think there’s a need to rush this.”

Kim Hyun-Sung and Park Deok-Gu were always in conflict over the strangest topic, but they agreed on the same idea this time.

‘What the hell is going on with Kim Hyun-Sung?’

Kim Hyun-Sung seemed wary, even though he had been wanting to see the chosen warrior. I wasn’t sure if he got a bad feeling or something, but… I figured he might have sensed the strange energy the holy sword was emitting.

However, if I had to think of a different reason…

‘He could be thinking about the Federation incident.’

It all started with an outsider coming between us, and it got to the point where there were talks about me leaving the guild, so he probably didn’t want that to happen again.

Without the holy sword, Rafael would be nothing more than an outsider.

‘They’re not wrong… ’

No one really knew Rafael aside from the fact that he was Benigoa’s chosen warrior. I investigated him, but I didn’t dig that deep into just what kind of a person he was. Of course, it wasn’t that I didn’t want to do so; I simply didn’t have enough time.

Despite that, I told them that I wanted him next to me. In other words, it wasn’t really strange that Kim Hyun-Sung was anxious. Putting all those reasons together was enough to make any of the members here feel anxious, not to mention our mean regressor.

Kim Hyun-Sung was in my shoes back when he appointed Jo Hye-Jin as the Chief Secretary of the Blue Guild, even though we knew nothing about her.

Right now, Jo Hye-Jin and I were the best of friends, but… at the time, Jo Hye-Jin was just an outsider. I managed to stop her from obtaining actual power, but I didn’t really feel good about it at the time.

‘You have no right to say that.’

“I think it’s best to think about it again. The atmosphere hasn't been great recently, and it’s an important time for many reasons. Mr. Deok-Gu is right, I think we should take our time—”

“I understand that you’re worried, but it’ll be fine. Most importantly, I don’t want to delay things any longer. Rafael is just an ordinary person who doesn’t know anything, so it’s best to put the training plan into action as soon as possible.

”If I can help him by staying by his side, I believe we’ll achieve a synergistic effect in many ways. I can teach him in more ways than one, especially when it comes to the mental department. Mental growth is just as important as physical growth,” I explained.

“That’s why I’m saying that you helping him is the problem. I didn’t want to say this, but what if he’s involved with a demon? What are you going to do if he’s using an unexpected and bizarre way to control the holy sword?” Park Deok-Gu joined in.

‘It’s been a while since I heard the word bizarre, Deok-Gu.’

“It doesn’t matter if the Vatican or the Democratic Country takes him for the time

being, but I don't think it's right for you to take care of him. I just have a bad feeling about the guy and you know I've never been wrong about situations like this…" he added.

'You're right. You're really good at sniffing out fishy things. You've surprised me quite a few times as well. Damn it. Why not use that skill when it's actually necessary?'

The dispirited Kim Hyun-Sung gave Park Deok-Gu the right to speak. He probably decided not to step in, as Park Deok-Gu was saying what he wanted to say. It was a great move since he would be able to avoid being the target of resentment.

"We're doing the tutorial, so I don't think it's a bad idea to have him join the Blue Guild in the meantime. It'll be resolved if you just visit the guild once in a while," Kim Hyun-Sung suggested.

It felt like Park Deok-Gu was being used as a shield everywhere.

Kim Hyun-Sung was also using Park Deok-Gu as a shield to make blunt comments against me.

"I'm against it as well. I understand what you're saying, but I think we need some time to get to know him. I honestly don't feel comfortable about bringing him into the guild, either…" Sun Hee-Young finally chimed in.

The three rookies were silent, as they didn't really have the right to speak.

Hwang Jung-Yeon and Ahn Ki-Mo were watching one step away while Jo Hye-Jin was on their side. She seemed more enthusiastic than I thought, but I knew why—she was the only person who knew that I had a terminal illness.

She probably believed that Rafael might discover my weakness, or perhaps he might be a bad influence.

'The Blue Guild has become stagnant as well.'

Even Elena seemed reluctant to accept an outsider, but it wasn't because she felt hostile toward Rafael. It felt like they had a natural dislike of outsiders because we had been working together for so long.

It seemed that the incident involving the Federation at the time had played a big part

in the creation of this old-school clique.

'But they had no issues recruiting that tamer into the guild.'

I saw Alps hugging her dog while staring at us from one corner. She looked like she was thinking that she shouldn't have been here.

'Now that I think about it, it's been a while since we had a new recruit.'

Our guild preferred quality more than quantity, but it had become a bit too excessive. The Red Mercenary Guild and the Black Swan Guild were recruiting guild members every year, which made them different from the Blue Guild.

'I should visit Hee-Ra noona.'

I had other thoughts for a moment, but my decision didn't change.

"I feel like you guys are on edge… Nothing is going to happen. Rafael isn't an enemy. He's an ally. You'll be in charge of the tutorial, Mr. Hyun-Sung and nothing good will come out of you keeping your guard up like that," I told him.

"But…"

"As all of you said, I'm against completely putting our guard down, but personally, I guarantee that there won't be any problems with this decision. You should all know that accepting him is better than pushing him away. What I'm saying is that Rafael is no different from Miss Alps, our new guild member," I continued.

"…"

"Miss Hye-Jin has been visiting me every other day, and Miss Park Lian and the others have been working hard every day. I'm not weak either… so thinking that something is going to happen is a bit…" I paused.

"What we're saying is that we smell something fishy," Park Deok-Gu said.

"You shouldn't judge people based on that assumption," I criticized him.

"There really is something fishy… Really. I'm not usually the type to be suspicious of people, but… I just got a bad feeling… as soon as I saw Nabael's[1] face," he added.

Kim Hyun-Sung nodded, but there was no room for negotiation here. I had already made my decision, and I had always been stubborn. I had to be firm here, as things would become too complicated if he ended up somewhere where I couldn't see him.

"I've made my decision. I'm just here to tell you guys, not to ask for permission," I said.

"…"

"We can't really say much when you put it like that… We're just worried…" Park Deok-Gu expressed.

"…"

"More importantly, Mr. Rafael expressed that he wanted to work while under the Continental Protection Management Committee, even though the chosen one has the privilege to choose freely…" I trailed off.

"That's true, but…"

"…"

"He's going to join the Blue Guild with me once the Continental Protection Management Committee disbands," I added.

'That's if Rafael is still alive when that time comes… '

"So don't you think he needs your kind attention? I heard his story, and he didn't grow up in a great environment… He's confused, and he needs help. I don't think it's a bad idea to open up to him a bit," I suggested, but they still seemed wary of him.

"Just meet him for now. Actually, I think inviting him to dinner is a good idea…" I said.

"Today is a meeting for the guild members. No… outsiders allowed," Kim Ye-Ri chimed in.

'In that case, you're an outsider as well. What's your problem, Kim Ye-Ri?'

I turned to look at Kim Ye-Ri.

Ahn Ki-Mo saw that and chimed in. “Now, now. Let’s all calm down. Honestly, the sub guild master isn’t completely wrong, and I’m sure Rafael is the most shocked out of everyone. He suddenly became the chosen warrior… If I were in his shoes…”

‘Shit, good job, Ahn Ki-Mo.’

“If there’s really something bothering you, you can use this opportunity to confirm it. Regardless, Mr. Rafael will be working with us, so I think it’s best to at least meet him. There’s a reason why the sub guild master called us here,” Ahn Ki-Mo continued.

“Mr. Ki-Mo is right.”

‘You’re doing good as well, Jung-Yeon.’

“Even if he doesn’t join the Blue Guild, it doesn’t change the fact that we’re going to be seeing him. Isn’t that right, Guild Master?” she asked.

Kim Hyun-Sung looked like he had no idea what to say because of the differing opinions.

In the end, he nodded slowly, and Kim Ye-Ri clicked her tongue.

‘Why is she so annoyed?’

I seriously considered if she had finally hit puberty.

Anyway, thanks to Kim Hyun-Sung’s acknowledgement, it became an established fact that Rafael was going to join the guild’s meeting. I ordered someone to summon Rafael

He joined us with an awkward expression and while scratching his head.

“Hello, Blue Guild members. I’m Rafael. I’ve always wanted to meet you… And… *Um*… a-a-and…” Rafael stuttered.

The problem was that there was still palpable tension in the air.

“It’s all thanks to Ki-Young hyung that I’m able to meet… great people like you… Thank you very much,” he added.

The way he called me hyung without hesitation made the atmosphere turn for the worse.

“Hyung… I didn’t make a mistake, did I?” he whispered to me. However, I was sure the majority of the people here heard what he said to me. Our Kim Ye-Ri looked especially annoyed. I had no idea why, but she looked like Smartie when she first met Max.

The other members didn’t look all that different.

‘These guys… I’m sure that’s not the case, but I hope they’re not thinking that Rafael is trying to take me away from them.’

They acted like the mother of their household was suddenly kidnapped by someone else. They felt like their long-lost mother had just returned to their house with an illegitimate child in tow.

I was sure it wasn’t as simple as that, but at least a chunk of their expression was caused by what I had just said. I also believed that it was a reasonable assumption to make.

The others were silent, and they were trying their best to conceal their feelings.

However, our lovely regressor wasn’t shy about expressing that he was wary of Rafael.

‘Ah… I think our Hyun-Sung… has caught on… ’

Other than that, I really had no idea what to say.

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1. It’s really written like this lmao, I guess Park-Deok-Gu doesn’t want to memorize Rafael’s name ☜

CHAPTER 617
NEGATIVE PUBLIC OPINION (3)

'I'm sure Kim Hyun-Sung hasn't caught on to Rafael's identity, and it's not like Rafael had done anything to reveal his identity.'

I thought about the time he appeared and was convinced that he wouldn't immediately get caught. It seemed like he had thoroughly sorted out his past. Zone Five also didn't contain any evidence of his activities.

If he were that dumb, he wouldn't have been able to do something as bold as this. I wasn't sure about the details, but he had definitely succeeded in obtaining a new identity for himself.

If it hadn't been for Mind's Eye, I wouldn't have immediately noticed his identity.

Kim Hyun-Sung looked troubled, and he was obviously wary of Rafael.

I couldn't really explain it, but… it was probably…

'His instinct.'

The regressor's instincts had to have activated and told him that there was something fishy. Of course, I wasn't really sure, as I wasn't on the same level as him, but his instinct was probably similar to Park Deok-Gu's instinct.

Was it like Mind's Eye but created through experience? Or was it like a lightbulb coming to life upon detecting danger? I assumed that it was something along the lines of those, but how would I know that for sure? I couldn't read Kim Hyun-Sung's thoughts, after all.

'I've never become someone like Kim Hyun-Sung… '

I was sure that only people on Kim Hyun-Sung's level had such an instinct.

'What should I do about this?'

I was worried, but I thought that it wouldn't be too bad. Of course, people should refrain from openly pushing people back or rejecting people, but it was better for him to be wary than not.

I did decide to turn Rafael into one of us, but he wasn't part of *my* group yet. He could stab me in the back, so I needed people to keep an eye on him.

More importantly…

'I can't keep an eye on him by myself.'

I would be glad if Kim Hyun-Sung took on that role, and the part that kind of surprised me was that Jung Ha-Yan didn't really show any reaction. I thought about it and found that it was understandable, as she would still spend a lot of time with me, even if a weird guy were to join the guild.

In other words, she was not interested in the discussion.

Rafael was panicking, as some were hostile toward him while others were indifferent. I was sure he wasn't expecting a warm welcome, but this welcome was probably out of his expectations.

Of course, he was probably relieved that his next destination was the Committee.

'I wonder what he's thinking.'

He looked flustered, but I was curious as to what he thought about the indescribable atmosphere.

"First of all, I'm glad to meet you. I'm Kim Hyun-Sung, the Guild Master of the Blue Guild."

"*Ahem*… I'm Park Deok-Gu. You're pretty good-looking."

"Hello, I'm Ahn Ki-Mo."

"Kim Ye-Ri."

"I'm Elena, and I'm a member of the Blue Guild. It's an honor to meet you."

“I’m Sun Hee-Young. That’s all you need to know.”

“I-I-It’s nice to meet you. I’m Jung Ha-Yan.”

“It’s actually an honor for me. I’ve always seen you through the Goddess’ Mirror, so I can’t tell if I’m dreaming right now. I had the same feeling when I first saw Ki-Young hyung, but… I’m so touched seeing all the members of the Blue Guild. I’m really struggling to contain my joy…” Rafael expressed.

“Looks like you’re a sociable person,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“Excuse me?” he asked.

“I said, you seem like a social person,” he repeated.

‘Why are you embarrassing him like that?’

“Please forgive us if our hospitality seems a bit lacking, Mr. Rafael. This is the first time an outsider is in the guild’s regular meeting, so we didn’t have time to prepare other things,” he said.

He spoke as if he was questioning why Rafael was here to join the guild’s regular meeting.

“No… it’s fine. I… feel like I came at the last minute… I feel bad and rude for coming… I’m ashamed,” he expressed.

“There’s no need to apologize. It’s only right that we show you hospitality since you’re Mr. Ki-Young’s guest,” he told him.

It sounded as if he was telling Rafael that he was *my* guest, not his guest.

“I just feel bad because the only thing we prepared is food,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

He was probably telling him to just leave after eating.

It had been a while since I saw the old Kim Hyun-Sung. It was an expression he would show whenever he was talking to outsiders, but he sounded particularly harsh today. I was sure that even the dumbest person out there would see that he was hostile.

Unless Rafael was an idiot, there was no way he would fail to notice that the others weren't happy to see him here. I was looking forward to seeing just what he would do to get out of this situation.

Meanwhile, Ahn Ki-Mo cracked a few jokes, but his efforts bore no fruit. The atmosphere was already ruined.

'This is the Kim Hyun-Sung that I know. What would you do without me?'

If I were Kim Hyun-Sung, I wouldn't have acted that way.

Putting your guard up like that just because you were a bit suspicious about something…

'Will cause you to lose more than gain more… '

He was openly showing that he was suspicious of Rafael, which made Rafael wary as well. I was fine with Rafael's behavior, as it would allow me to limit Rafael's movement, but I was sure our regressor would find it difficult to get what he wanted.

As expected, Rafael was flustered, and his plan to gain favor from the members of the guild and establish a foundation for their activities went down the drain before it even started.

It didn't take him long to realize that I was the only person he could rely on, and as expected, he started relying on me a lot more. I couldn't really describe it, but whenever he started a conversation or made comments, he would mention me or ask for my opinion. It was as if he were desperately telling them, "No need to be that wary of me. You can see that I'm close to Ki-Young hyung, your sub guild master. See?"

It wasn't a bad idea, but it wasn't effective. Actually, they were more focused on Alps.

Kim Ye-Ri and Park Deok-Gu took care of Alps a lot, as the two were her teachers. It had also been quite a lot since we got a new member, so they showed interest in her.

"Hey, looks like that sheepdog of yours is adapting well. What do you think?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"*Woof! Woof!*"

"*Huh?* What…" Alps asked.

"Your thoughts on joining the Blue Guild," he replied.

"Everything… is interesting to me. I never thought I would be able to join the Blue Guild… or personally meet Father Lee Ki-Young… More importantly, I find it interesting that I'm in the same guild as my teachers…" she answered.

"We're going to be seeing each other often! So you don't have to feel that way. *Ah*, now that I think about it, didn't you take the holy sword test as well? It's unfortunate that you got eliminated, but… I really thought you were going to get chosen," he said.

"I thought the same thing…" she mumbled.

"While we're on the subject… what did it feel like?" he asked.

"Well, I can't really describe the feeling… I'm kind of embarrassed to tell you this, but it was really difficult trying to prevent myself from vomiting. I can't really say it was evil… It felt like I was grabbing… dirty trash or disgusting… maggots with my bare hands.

"The moment I grabbed it, I knew I wasn't its owner… I endured it out of stubbornness, but as you all saw, the result wasn't that great," she replied.

"…"

"I felt bad for the elders back home… and I was heartbroken because I felt like I let down the people of the continent that believed in me, especially my teachers, but… I'm relieved because a chosen warrior finally appeared. What was it like for you?" she asked.

'She's really nice.'

It seemed the rookie pitied the shunned Rafael.

"I don't think I felt anything like that when I grabbed it… I honestly don't remember what happened because everything was so chaotic, and I was so nervous. I felt like something sent me flying, and the sword was already in my hand when I came to my senses," Rafael answered.

“So the sword already had an owner…” she mumbled.

Alps seemed disappointed. It made sense, as she worked hard for the sword.

Anyway, everyone nodded at Alps’ comment, and it was as if they were suddenly reminiscing about the fact that Rafael had pulled out the sword that no one had been able to pull out until he arrived.

‘He’s worthy of being called the chosen warrior.’

Rafael truly seemed worthy of being the chosen warrior from what he had shown at the time.

And that was when Kim Hyun-Sung started talking…

“I’m not so sure,” he said.

“…”

“A holy sword will either lose its light or choose another owner. If it comes to dislike its owner, it will gradually lose its power. The test isn’t over just because the holy sword has already chosen you. The test was just the beginning,” said Kim Hyun-Sung.

I recalled him saying how masked scum Jin Cheong made the holy sword lose its light. I didn’t want to recall Jin Cheong’s wickedness, as he had employed a terrible, horrible, and cowardly method to push the chosen warrior into a corner.

“I’m… aware, Guild Master,” Rafael said.

“Have you read the name sword, or do you know anything about it?” he questioned.

“…”

I didn’t know what to say. Rafael would probably never be able to read the sword’s description, as it was an item that Lucifer herself had once wielded. However, Kim Hyun-Sung’s remark definitely astonished Rafael.

It wasn’t strange because it was impossible to read the description of an item if its owner wasn’t qualified to do so or the ownership ceremony was still ongoing. If the item’s restrictions were strict, I wouldn’t be able to read it even with Mind’s Eye.

However, the true owner was the opposite. They could view every information about their item, and they could use that to their advantage.

It was the same for Kim Hyun-Sung's Durandal, and it seemed that the holy sword in Kim Hyun-Sung's past life was the same as well…

"It's meaningful knowing that the sword has chosen you, but if you really can't see any information about the sword… it's difficult to say that the sword has completely acknowledged you as its owner," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"Is it because I'm too lacking?" Rafael asked as his expression changed.

Of course, he didn't look all that different on the outside, but he seemed really worried.

It seemed that the sword hadn't told him about its true name and its functions. I was sure he was confused about whether it was actually because he wasn't qualified to know the sword's name and functions or if it was because of a different reason.

To make things worse, Kim Hyun-Sung was being extremely blunt.

"Well, you don't need to be that worried, Mr. Rafael. Mr. Hyun-Sung is right, but it hasn't been that long since the sword chose you, so it's not strange that you're lacking. It's only natural for the sword to feel dissatisfied," I chimed in.

"…"

"If you strengthen yourself by learning and studying many different things, the holy sword of gray light will eventually reveal its true name to you," I added.

Obviously, that day would never come, but…

'It was possible… '

If Rafael expressed that he truly wanted to be with the light, the holy sword of gray light might answer him.

'A demon is in his head, so the holy sword obviously won't grant him its power. However, things might change if he follows the light sincerely. Everything is Her will.'

The most important prerequisite to wielding the holy sword was a sincere heart willing to follow the light. Rafael had to get rid of the demon in his head as soon as possible.

Just like that, the dinner continued…

“I had fun today. I’ll try to make time again soon.”

As expected, Kim Hyun-Sung ended the short meeting after dinner.

CHAPTER 618
NEGATIVE PUBLIC OPINION (4)

"I had fun today. I'll try to make time again soon."

Kim Hyun-Sung bid farewell in the same manner as usual, but it sounded like he was telling Rafael to go home. It seemed Rafael also thought that he wouldn't gain anything by staying here, so he got ready to leave.

'He's probably thinking that today is a total failure.'

I was sure that becoming close to the members of the Blue Guild was his goal for accepting the invitation.

Of course, one day wouldn't be enough for him to accomplish such a goal, but it wasn't an exaggeration to say that nothing really happened throughout this dinner.

Many different thoughts were certainly flitting across his head, and he was definitely thinking that today's dinner was a waste of time.

A few people were friendly toward Rafael, but they were worried about the guild master's reaction, so they couldn't really express themselves properly.

To make matters worse, Park Deok-Gu, who had been saying that he had a bad feeling about Rafael, had been making things worse by making it obvious that he disliked Rafael's presence in the guild meeting.

Kim Hyun-Sung did the same as Park Deok-Gu.

Meanwhile, Sun Hee-Young didn't even bother glancing at Rafael, Kim Ye-Ri was going through puberty, so she was more expressive, while Jung Ha-Yan wasn't interested in Rafael at all.

The guild members knew that Kim Hyun-Sung didn't like Rafael, so they didn't dare to act out of place.

'Don't be too disappointed, man. Things don't always go your way, you know.'

If I were to rate this guild meeting, I would say it was two stars out of five.

Rafael was indirectly told to leave, so it wasn't strange that he was in dismay.

"I can walk you back to—"

"I remember the way, hyung. You don't have to go to all that trouble," Rafael interrupted.

"I'll have someone walk you there," Kim Hyun-Sung offered.

"It's fine, Guild Master," he declined.

"I'm relieved to hear you say that. I'll walk you to the door," said Kim Hyun-Sung.

I was embarrassed because Kim Hyun-Sung was trying to get rid of him as fast as possible, and it was clear why he wanted Rafael to leave so badly.

There was probably something he wanted to say to me.

'…'

In the end, Rafael left and Kim Hyun-Sung started talking to me.

"I would like to talk to you about something. Do you have time to talk?"

"*Ah*… yeah, sure…" I replied.

"You can lead the guild members to the next location, Miss Hee-Young. I'll catch up," he ordered.

"Okay."

Jo Hye-Jin glanced at me as if she was worried about something, but when I signaled her that things were fine, she nodded and left quietly. It seemed she was worried that I might lose consciousness in front of Kim Hyun-Sung.

Obviously, Kim Hyun-Sung looked pretty serious, and he was probably going to tell

me his thoughts. I had an idea as to what he was going to say. It had to be the possibility that Rafael wasn't the chosen warrior, or he might insist that I had made the wrong decision while telling me his doubts.

I had spent so much time with Kim Hyun-Sung that it wasn't really that difficult for me to predict what he wanted to say to me.

Obviously, I wasn't going to listen to him. I wouldn't be able to even sleep in peace if Rafael ended up being sent to the border just because Kim Hyun-Sung was anxious about Rafael. It was better to keep him close and lead him to the light myself.

I figured it was better for me to beat him to the chase. My heart broke because of what I was about to say, but it was necessary. I had to transfer the blame onto someone else, and considering our long-standing relationship—the first one to get mad would win.

"What was that?" I questioned.

"Excuse me?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

"I'm asking about your attitude toward Rafael. The holy sword has chosen him, and we have been waiting for him for so long. The Blue Guild shouldn't push him away. We should get him to cooperate with us as soon as possible…" I answered.

"I can explain," he said.

"I know you have your reasons, but it's undeniable that you treated him badly. He's the guest that *I* invited, so what do you think he will think of me because of what you showed him? You should have considered my position as well. I don't know how I'm going to apologize to him about today's events," I complained.

"So—"

"If the chosen warrior thinks poorly about the Blue Guild or the Continental Protection Management Committee, the situation will get really complicated. There won't be any issues in the short term, but there will be issues down the road," I continued.

"That's—"

“He was my guest, so you shouldn’t have treated him like that. I understand Deok-Gu or the others behaving that way, but you shouldn’t have joined them. What happened during dinner today was really—really disappointing,” I added.

“…”

‘Was I too harsh?’

I was worried about his reaction, but I was surprised at my nagging.

“I’m sure there’s a reason behind your behavior, but…” I paused.

‘Ah, man. I think he’s starting to lose confidence.’

Kim Hyun-Sung had been losing confidence since the demon contractor invasion incident. It was to the point that perhaps I was forcing my thoughts onto him a bit too much. I also actually forgot that the regressor’s social skills were mediocre at best.

‘Did I upset him too much?’

It couldn’t be helped. It was his fault, after all.

‘I’m kind of worried because I know what Kim Hyun-Sung thinks about me… ’

I was the only friend—no, brother, whom he shared his deepest secrets with. I was his precious comrade carrying his burdens with him. I was the only friend who truly understood him, so I was sure he was nervous about the idea of us growing apart.

The idea of losing a friend wouldn’t faze the extroverts, as they could simply make another one after a night of drinking outside. However, everyone knew that Kim Hyun-Sung wasn’t that type of person.

The 80-year-old Mr. Choi would definitely be upset if Mr. Oh and Mr. Park went out for drinks without him, and it wasn’t really strange as it was human nature to be upset whenever one was left out.

The same could be said when one day, one’s best friend was suddenly leaving messages on read until they eventually started avoiding altogether. It wasn’t a rare event, and it would also happen to the extroverts out there.

In other words, Kim Hyun-Sung was extremely nervous about the possibility of that happening, as he never really had a friend before.

I was his first true friend in decades. Relationships were precious to just about anyone else out there, but I was sure that a true relationship was more meaningful to him.

We made some progress after he confessed his regressor status, but we quickly grew apart and got awkward around each other after not seeing each other for a long time.

To make matters worse, he was the type to resolve issues by swinging his sword, so he truly had no idea how to resolve this type of issue.

I expressed my anger because I thought getting angry first would make me the winner, but I think it was best for me to take a step back for the sake of Kim Hyun-Sung's mental health. Lee Ji-Hye's words suddenly popped up in my head.

"*Whoo…*"

"I'm sorry… but…" Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"It's fine. You don't have to apologize. I should be the one apologizing. I've been a bit on edge lately, so I got angry for a moment. I didn't need to go that far…" I told him.

"…"

"I've been really busy lately… and since I've been taking care of many tasks at the same time, I've been kind of stressed out. For some reason, I feel like I'm getting cornered with my back against a wall," I confessed.

"It's fine. It's true that it was my fault… Yeah, it's true," he said.

"I don't think so. I'm sure you had a reason for acting that way. Is there something bothering you?"I asked.

"Yes. I'm not entirely certain yet, but…" he paused.

"…"

"I think we should consider the possibility of Rafael not being the chosen warrior.

Not only is he can't read the holy sword's information, but he also—"

"It can become a problem, but it's a fact that Rafael can control the gray light. I've been listening to everything you said earlier, and I'm aware that I shouldn't trust people easily, but we don't really have enough time to move cautiously," I interrupted him.

"That's…"

"You know that we have no choice but to proceed with the training plan. Aside from the cards we currently have up our sleeves, we need another card. Aside from the blockade in the northwest region, we need someone capable of keeping up with you. Do you still remember the war against the Republic?" I asked.

"What do you…"

'I'm talking about you, tactical Kim Hyun-Sung.'

"If Rafael can do the same thing as you… it'll give us plenty of space to maneuver. Of course, you'll be safe as well," I said.

I was basically counting my chickens before they were hatched, but if we managed to use tactical Rafael, we would be able to completely flip the tables on the battlefield.

In addition to relieving some of Kim Hyun-Sung's burden, we could also use Rafael as an efficient chess piece, given enough training.

Of course, Kim Hyun-Sung was hesitant because he had his doubts about Rafael, but…

'This is directly related to your safety, Hyun-Sung.'

Kim Hyun-Sung's stamina wasn't unlimited.

I patted his shoulder, and he smiled slightly. However, it seemed like he was forcing himself to smile, but for now…

'He agreed, right?'

I thought I had to strike while the iron was hot.

“I know you’re really worried about my safety, but there really won’t be any big problems. Miss Park Lian or Ha-Yan will be by my side. Rafael is also not strong enough to harm me just yet, and I’m sure you know that very well,” I said.

“I do,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“We must start the chosen warrior training plan as soon as possible. It won’t be too late for us to change things once we’ve started the plan. If there are issues, we can still take care of them by then…”

‘Then.’

“Even if Rafael is problematic, I should be able to handle him. I can definitely take care of him,” I continued.

“…”

“So let’s head back. Everyone is probably waiting for us. The second round of our get-together will really be the Blue Guild’s regular meeting,” I suggested.

“Yes, you’re right,” he said.

He was still hesitant, but he seemed quite relieved when I smiled at him brightly.

He couldn’t really express his thoughts properly, so our conversation was cut short. Of course, he was probably thinking that he had already told me what he wanted to tell me.

Obviously, I knew what our regressor was worried about. The point was that his anxiety might threaten my safety, and we were basically worried about the same thing. The only difference was the method we wanted to employ to get rid of our anxiety.

‘Let’s visit Kasugano Yuno and Benigoa.’

It was better to give Rafael some time and show him the truth rather than cornering him too quickly. I wonder how he would react the moment he realized that his beliefs had been nothing but lies.

‘Will he deny the truth, or will he accept it?’

CHAPTER 619
TRUTH WITHOUT LIES (1)

It felt like a long time passed, even though it hadn't been that long since that fateful dinner. To be exact, it had been two months since then, but it felt like it had been six months.

I was happy because the coins in my hands were showing bullish signals, and it wasn't just a mere delusion of mine anymore. As expected, the first coin that showed bullish signals was the Chimera Coin. I considered it akin to a blue chip stock, so I didn't think it would break the price floor and plummet anytime soon.

I was always busy, as there were many things going on. However, I made sure to make time for the coin because it was guaranteed to succeed. Things were hectic, so I reduced my sleep time for the sake of results, and the results I got were satisfactory.

'The Dungeon Tutorial version.'

Complete…

'The Rift Museum version.'

Complete…

'The Garden of Horror version.'

Complete…

The three named angels were complete, and I even completed them ahead of schedule.

Of course, the foundation wasn't really that solid yet, but Han Sora's hard work allowed the production to gain momentum. At first, I didn't really think that I would be able to create all 666 angels, but at this rate, I was convinced that I could create more than 666 angels.

Goosebumps broke out all over me at the thought of seeing 666 angels fighting with the light.

'We just need to keep going like this… '

Benigoa's issue was working out better than I initially expected.

Actually, it was more accurate to say that things had come to a lull, as the higher-ups still hadn't reached a conclusion about how they would handle Benigoa and the issues related to the continent.

'And that's exactly why I think that they won't go too far.'

Their nature was definitely different from the demons. If Benigoa were a demon affiliated with Lucifer, she would have already been sent to hell.

'Of course, Lucifer might give her mercy and forgive her.'

Regardless, I was sure that the situation would have ended long ago if Benigoa were a demon. I wasn't sure what was going on, but the higher-ups probably couldn't continue their discussion for some reason.

Of course, it was a great thing for me, as I was having a massive headache at just the thought of having to deal with something like that.

Fortunately, I didn't have to do anything other than wait.

Benigoa also told me that the higher-ups took a thousand years to conclude the previous issue, similar to Benigoa's issue, so it seemed that I could say that I didn't have to worry about Benigoa in the meantime.

Benigoa's holy power returned, and the situation itself had improved. The fact that the coin that had been showing nothing but bearish signals all this while was finally recovering made me sleep better at night.

If one were to nitpick, the coin didn't actually plummet, and I was thankful for that. Of course, I had no idea when the next issue would pop up, so I still made sure to be prepared for Benigoa's trial.

Regardless, I was able to relax slightly as the issue was in a lull.

'It feels great.'

As for the last coin…

'It's not too bad.'

If someone were to ask me for technical analysis about the Holy Sword Coin, I would say that it was making its way to the moon.

I was convinced that the Holy Sword Coin was beyond saving, so even the smallest price increase made me happy. Obviously, Rafael wasn't always following me around.

'He's still suspicious… '

He said he was doing his best, but he still couldn't completely get rid of the demon inside his head, so I wasn't really disappointed in him.

He would only get anxious if I were to rush him, so I made sure to slowly bond with him until he trusted me. In that sense, I could say that the results were great. We had gotten used to spending time with each other.

His daily life was now filled with light and comfort, which was unlike his previous life, where he was locked in a tiny dark room and had only been doing nothing but useless things with those demon contractors.

He spent his days eating balanced meals to his heart's content, and he was always smiling. He would have meaningful conversations with the people around him while basking in the comfortable light.

He laughed with other people, and he even had hobbies now.

Humans would eventually adapt to their surroundings. I wasn't convinced that he had already abandoned the thought of revenge, but he was probably enjoying his current life.

Even now, he looked really happy.

"Now then… let's end our prayer to Goddess Benigoa."

The short prayer ended, and the priests called out the goddess' name quietly.

Of course, Rafael was at the very front.

Just then, the warm light poured through the window, and the way it shone on me made me feel satisfied. No one would think that I looked like a demon who was trying to control the continent.

'I'll smile brightly while I'm at it.'

When the holy service ended, Father Basel approached me first.

"That was amazing, Father Lee Ki-Young."

"I'm glad to hear that. I was worried that it wasn't enough," I confessed.

"*Hahaha*, no one would think that your prayer is lacking. I'm sure Goddess Benigoa is really happy. Looking at our warrior of gray light, you must be thinking the same thing as me…" he said.

"Yes, I am. He looked so holy that I couldn't take my eyes off of him… For some reason, the prayer made me feel ashamed of myself," I told him.

'Man, you're so good at talking.'

"I see…"

"…"

"What do you think, Father Lee Ki-Young? Since we're here, how about sitting in that seat? I heard many priests are waiting to attend a service led by you… I think it wouldn't be a bad idea to do it once for the priests," he suggested.

"How can I take such a holy position when you're here?" I said.

"That's not true. I'm embarrassed to say this, but I'm not as healthy as I used to be. I'm starting to think that Goddess Benigoa will soon call me to Her side," he said.

'You've been living a healthy life while throwing temper tantrums every once in a while, old man, so what are you talking about? I have no intention of becoming the pope, you know?'

“You mean…” I paused.

“Let’s talk about the details later. There are many things involved, and this isn’t the place to talk about that… But before that… I would like you to be the host of the gray light warrior’s appointment ceremony, Father Lee Ki-Young,” he requested.

‘I’d be happy to.’

“If that’s your wish, Father Basel…” I said.

“You made the right choice. Now that I think about it, did you say you have plans today?” he asked.

“I did…” I answered.

“*Kgh*… that’s unfortunate,” he commented.

“There’s always next time, so you don’t have to be so disappointed, Father Basel,” I told him.

“Please drink tea with me the next time we meet,” he requested.

“Of course.”

“Thank you for your hard work, hyung,” Rafael chimed in.

“I didn’t do anything. I just did what I had to do. Shall we get going?” I asked.

“Okay.”

I saw him smiling slightly, but I wasn’t sure whether his smile was sincere or not.

However, it was better for me to assume that he was acting.

‘Well, it doesn’t really matter if he’s acting… ’

He should be the one who should get worried, not me. My plans were working out smoothly, but he was in a pretty troubling situation.

‘He still hasn’t gained any results.’

I was sure that fact made him feel a massive headache.

Of course, he had become physically stronger, but he was getting farther and farther from his goal. He probably didn't know where to start digging for information or what he should do.

It seemed like he was talking to the priests at the Vatican and some of the members of the Continental Protection Management Committee, but he wouldn't be able to get the information that he wanted to get.

In fact, asking *such* questions was difficult to begin with.

'How can he tell them that he finds me suspicious? Can he really say—Father Lee Ki-Young is suspicious. If you find anything strange or any evidence of his wrongdoing, come to me and show it to me.'

Those questions would make just about anyone a heretic. Rafael had succeeded in going beyond enemy lines, but he hadn't been able to do anything.

He looked at me with the determination to dig up dirty information about me, but he had been hearing nothing but…

"My body is dirty… I'm afraid I'll bring harm to Father Lee Ki-Young…"

"No one in this world has a dirty body. We're simply sick, so you don't have to say that about yourself. So please—"

"N-no… y-you might get infected…"

'Infected, my ass. I'm the Plaguelord, so there's no way I can get infected. If anything, I'm probably the one who got you infected.'

Anyone could tell I was doing my best to treat the patient with an infectious disease.

Rafael's expression was grim as he stared at me.

However, his expression wasn't really something worthy of criticism. It wasn't just him. Any human being would react the same way as him, as the room was filled with a disgusting smell that seemed capable of digging deep into one's brain.

The floor was also stained with pus, and the patients' flesh was rotting.

We were in a small village that had been abandoned by the living, and who would think that I was an éminence grise when I was working hard in a place like this?

"I-I'll help you, hyung," Rafael offered.

"It's fine. It's probably better if you help the other priests, Mr. Rafael," I told him.

If I could, I would have treated the tumors of the patients here.

I was greatly regretful that I couldn't show these people such a sight.

'This is the first time I resented holy power and alchemy.'

I couldn't show everyone such a heartwarming scene like that, but this scene was beautiful enough. After all, one's mind had to be sturdy enough for them to endure applying a healing ointment to such a gruesome-looking patient and examining them.

'Volunteer work is good.'

Rafael's feelings were painted all over his face.

The notorious human scum who had made a deal with a demon, the éminence grise trying to control the continent, and the villain with an incomparably wicked image, was actually treating patients at the bottom of society.

He sacrificed himself and poured his heart as well as his soul for the people whose illness couldn't be treated by holy power.

'Those damn demon contractors… I'm sure they haven't done anything like this, right?'

What I was doing was completely different from the politicians who would only do something like this for marketing and campaign purposes.

Rafael was currently examining Lee Ki-Young's daily life. He was probably thinking that the things he had seen through the media were all for marketing purposes, and he was completely right.

However, I had been regularly volunteering these days and had been pouring my heart as well as my soul into these people. I admit that I neglected them a bit recently, but I had been visiting them as often as possible.

I had already gotten familiar with the faces of each and every priest who had come here to volunteer with me.

I wasn't sure that not even one of them thought that I was just here to maintain my image. The volunteer group was united, and our teamwork was impeccable, which showed that it wasn't our first time doing something like this.

In addition, who would criticize people doing volunteer work?

Regardless of the goal, it was still a fact that human Lee Ki-Young was pouring everything he had for the sake of the weak and marginalized.

'They're no longer here, but those reactionary bastards will probably foam at the mouth upon seeing me do all these. They'll probably start shouting at me as well and say that I'm just acting.'

Of course, I wanted to ask them if they had done something like this before.

'Look at this. I'm not a bad person. See this?'

I could see the changes in the newbie warrior's expression. Doubt pervaded his face, but I was sure that he wasn't having doubts about me. He was having doubts about the truth that he had learned from those reactionary bastards.

CHAPTER 620
TRUTH WITHOUT LIES (2)

Rafael was definitely starting to doubt if Lee Ki-Young was truly the person he thought the latter was. Was he really a demon trying to control the continent?

Even the slightest doubt was fine, as I only needed that slightest doubt, and it could eventually sprout and bloom. Of course, I wasn't delusional enough to think that what I had been doing was enough to change our warrior of gray light.

After all, the demon contractors had to have brainwashed him for a long time. However, the very first step was making the small seed of doubt sprout and bloom. It was better to nurture that small doubt rather than recklessly rant about the truth.

'It took me two months to plant that seed.'

I didn't think it was a long time, but I smiled because there was progress.

"Are you okay?" I asked the patient.

"I-I'm fine. I'm really okay, Father Lee Ki-Young. I-I don't… know… what to say," they answered.

"I'm not doing this for recognition, so please lift your head. You don't need to lower yourself like that in front of me," I told them.

'Everyone is equal before the goddess. That's the teachings of the Church of Benigoa.'

"Thank you… so… so… much for doing this for people like us," they said.

"All of you are Goddess Benigoa's beloved children as well. If you keep belittling yourselves, She'll be upset. We have different roles, but we are Her children. So… please hang in there just a little longer," I explained.

"Father Lee Ki-Young…"

The patients were crying, and I was in the middle of it.

I didn't bother checking Rafael's expression again because it wasn't that difficult to deduce his thoughts.

The situation was too heartwarming for it to be an act and for me to do this just to show him what kind of person I was. In addition, I even ate with the patients after I was done treating them.

The highlight was me shaking off the hands of the priests who were trying to stop me from mingling with these infected patients.

'Shaking off the hands of the priests trying to stop me was the highlight.'

The groups of priests were definitely worried about me getting infected, but if there were even the slightest chance of me getting infected, I would have run out of here long ago.

"I think we've sorted things out, Father Lee Ki-Young," a priest reported.

"*Whoo*… that's a relief. I'll go to the next village after taking a break," I informed them.

"Okay. Then, should we do the usual…"

"Yes. I think it's best if we provide them with the basic benefits. Please schedule and manage it so that the Vatican priests can keep visiting here. As for those who have recovered, please provide them with jobs. I'm sure they'll appreciate that," I added.

"I'll see that it gets done," they said.

"Thank you," I said.

"I'm just doing my job. You worked hard today, Father Lee Ki-Young," the priest replied.

"It was nothing… Actually… all of you are working harder than me. I contacted you at the last second, but you all came with me…" I said.

"It is an incredible honor for us to be with you, so please feel free to summon us

anytime," the priest said.

I was proud to see them stare at me with admiration.

I turned my head upon sensing someone's presence, and I saw a hesitant Rafael standing by himself. I would have asked him what was wrong, but I could already see that he was confused, so I simply revealed a business-like smile.

He started walking toward me.

"Good job today," I said.

"It's nothing, hyung… I didn't… do much…" Rafael mumbled.

"No, you did more than enough. The fact that the warrior of gray light had come to see them was enough to give these people strength," I told him.

"This… So…" he spoke hesitantly.

"I hope I didn't get in the way… when you're so busy with training," I said.

"That's not true at all. Actually…" he paused.

"You should have been learning and studying these days…" I reminded him.

"…"

"But I know that you wanted to come to a place like this at least once," I added.

I moved over as if signaling him to sit next to me, and Rafael cautiously sat down next to me.

The sights we saw as we were on our way to the village were the same as the previous villages we had visited. Miserable was the most appropriate adjective to describe the village.

However, the people were smiling at us, and I even saw a child running toward our carriage. The people around the child tried to stop the child, but I nodded to tell them that it was fine. The child eventually reached me, and they handed me a piece of candy as they fidgeted and played with their hands.

'Ah… did they plan this out? I don't think they did… '

It looked like a publicity stunt, but I had to catch the ball that the little helper had handed over to me.

I accepted the candy with a smile and said, "Thank you."

I patted the child's head, and they ran away out of embarrassment. I looked to the side and saw the newbie warrior smiling unknowingly.

'It's working?'

I was kind of nervous, but…

'So you like this kind of stuff.'

Well, Rafael was young, so it seemed that this kind of sentimentalism was working on him. Since he liked it, I thought it was best if I planned something similar to it next time.

"While you're heading toward a goal, you tend to miss some things, and you'll start drifting away without realizing it," I said.

"…"

"I was surrounded by many good things, and I was living in a great environment, so I became ignorant of the things outside my comfort zone.

"Since I always looked at the bigger picture, I couldn't see the finer details. I keep on reminding myself, but people will still eventually get used to their own environment and take it for granted. At least that was the case for me," I continued.

"That's…"

"You'll work hard and move forward for the greater good. You'll meet a lot of people, experience many threats, your values will change, and you'll be thinking about many things. However, I won't criticize you for that. It is a part of your duty, after all," I explained.

"…"

“I invited you here because I didn’t want you to forget about this scenery,” I informed him.

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“I’m talking about what you’re fighting for and the values we’re fighting for,” I answered.

“I see,” he said.

“We have many things to protect. In this place…”

The atmosphere became very serious, and I never imagined that it would get this serious. Rafael stared at me quietly.

‘What the hell is the truth?’

I met Rafael many times in the last two months.

For some, it was a short time, and Rafael definitely thought the same, as he had already seen my nature.

I smiled warmly at him with the same face that was supposed to smile wickedly, and the hands that were supposed to sacrifice the marginalized people were helping them instead. My hobby was playing Chess, and I lived only for others while praying to Goddess Benigoa every day.

‘I know very well what you do during your breaks.’

Rafael frequented the archives to watch videos of incidents and anything I was involved in, and those incidents weren’t fabricated.

The videos during the Laios demon summoner incident would definitely get a 100% on Lindel Tomato[1].

Park Deok-Gu’s desperation was particularly eye-catching.

I was sure he wanted to find anything suspicious, but there was no way he would find anything like that. It was the same for the books, reviews, and the articles. I had never really shown the public anything suspicious about me.

The time we had spent together wasn't that long, but it was enough for me to plant the seed of doubt in his head. I knew that it would take him a while to emerge from the brainwashing of the demon contractors, so I made sure that everything was perfect.

Rafael's pupils were quivering; he was deep in his thoughts, and he looked utterly confused. He looked anxious and sick, seemingly brooding over something.

'It looks like he's ready.'

The timing was great. I didn't think it would hurt to keep building things up, but it was better to get it over with sooner rather than later.

"…"

"…"

"There's a place I'd like you to go with me," I said.

"Where…" Rafael asked.

"I would like to show you something," I said.

"…"

"I'm sure you're curious about why the continent needs a chosen warrior, why the continent is in danger, and if a threat really exists. You've been chosen by the holy sword, but I don't think you're still aware of the severity of the threat. You probably won't understand it unless you experience it yourself," I explained.

"…"

"Goddess Benigoa's words are true," I said.

"…"

"The continent is currently fighting an invisible enemy. We're preparing to face demons that are a lot stronger than the demons of the 72 Legions. Demons wearing the mask of angels and a demon from the outside world. They'll soon enter the continent," I continued.

"…"

"Many people will be sacrificed, and many people will die. Adventurers will have to fight for their lives, and the people of the continent will have to join hands to resist them," I added.

"Wasn't that…" he trailed off.

'A flat-out lie?'

"Wasn't that…" he repeated.

'A way to rally the people?'

"I mean…" he mumbled.

'Wasn't that a fake scenario you've made to control the continent?'

Of course not.

We were truly about to face a demon invasion, and Rafael had to pay close attention, as he would soon see the invasion for himself.

I didn't have to say anything else because it was better for him to see it himself.

My words wouldn't make him waver, but I had confidently told him that we had proof of the upcoming threat.

It would take a miracle to convince Rafael that the demon contractors had lied to him, but Kasugano Yuno was here, and she would show him that miracle.

Of course, those reactionaries had probably dug deep into the relationship between Kasugano Yuno and me, but I was sure he would find it difficult to deny the scene that he was about to see.

Moreover, I had already planted the seed of doubt in his head.

"I've been waiting."

Rafael sat nervously in front of Kasugano Yuno.

I didn't give any explanations and just pushed him in front of Kasugano Yuno.

Time passed, and Rafael started vomiting like Mikhail.

"*Bleeeeeck…!*"

"…"

"*Ha… ha—Blergh.* What… I saw… just now…" Rafael mumbled.

He looked at me in disbelief, but he soon dashed out of the room.

'Is he having a mental breakdown?'

I wasn't certain, but it felt like he was desperately denying the truth. I couldn't help but acknowledge the fact that the brainwashing of those demon contractors was stronger than I thought.

'He really is having a mental breakdown.'

---

1. Lindel Tomato rather than Rotten Tomato ☜

CHAPTER 621
TRUTH WITHOUT LIES (3)

Booooooooooom!!!

"…"

"*Cough… cough…*"

"Darling, are you sure he's a warrior? I don't think he'll be useful because of how weak he is. Can you just tell him to give up if he doesn't want to do it?" Cha Hee-Ra requested.

"…"

"I thought he wasn't bad when I first met him, but it turns out that he's nothing special now that I've seen him in action. I don't know why the holy sword even chose him in the first place. I mean, was he really chosen by the sword? What if the sword mistook him for someone else? I can't believe that Benigoa chose him as the warrior…" she complained.

"…"

"Excuse me, Mr. Warrior. Yeah, you. We're talking about you. What? Don't have the energy to talk? I don't know how much more you're going to embarrass yourself, but I suggest you get up quickly," she ordered Rafael.

"*Ha… ha…*"

"Do you even know how busy I am? Repeat twenty-five sets of the basic training routine, and we'll end it there. There's nothing dumber than spending my time with a student who doesn't want to be taught. Go back on your own after you're done, and don't annoy me by staying here," she warned.

Cha Hee-Ra's intensive training turned Rafael into a rag.

However, his concerned look stood out to me rather than his exhaustion.

As expected, he looked out of it.

'Ah… I think he's having a serious mental breakdown… '

I could understand why Cha Hee-Ra was so annoyed. She had taken time out of her strict schedule to show him kindness, but he actually dared to face Cha Hee-Ra's lessons with that kind of attitude.

'It's a relief that she hasn't hit him yet.'

If Cha Hee-Ra hadn't been considerate of me, she would have definitely given up a long time ago because even though Rafael was important, Cha Hee-Ra had never really been the type of person to do what she didn't like to do.

'Was it that shocking? Actually, I think it's more like he's confused… '

It had already been a few days since then, but he was still showing no signs of recovery. I wasn't really sure what to say. I came up with a few theories, but it was most likely that he still hadn't made his choice.

He wouldn't have reacted that way if he had already chosen between light and dark. Still, he would have to make a choice soon. It didn't matter whether he wanted to take revenge on me or awaken to protect the continent, as he needed power to do either of those two.

'He doesn't believe it despite seeing it with his own eyes.'

I could be wrong, but I couldn't deny that the possibility was high.

The possibility of him not making up his mind yet was bad news to me.

'Whatever you choose, you should still focus on your training.'

I put aside my work today and came here.

'Damn it, what a waste of time.'

I felt the same way as Cha Hee-Ra.

I noticed someone's presence, so I looked up and saw Cha Hee-Ra. Her trademark messy red hair still looked the same, and she still gave off a tough mercenary vibe.

She approached me while breathing roughly; it seemed that she was still annoyed.

I smiled slightly at her, and she sat down next to me before wiping her sweat off with a towel. She gestured at me to sit down next to her, and the way she performed that gesture made me think of a person in power.

I unknowingly sat next to her, and she smoothly placed her hand on my shoulder.

'She's pretty sly.'

"You did well, noona," I complimented her.

"Bullshit. I didn't even do anything. Anyway, I'm so annoyed. Where did you even find that guy… At this rate, I think it's better to just give up on him," she complained.

"…"

"I would have already given up on him if it weren't for you. He's been like that for several days now. I almost pulled his head off in the middle of training because I was so mad at him," she added.

'I don't think you should do that… '

"I took time out of my guild members' training to be here. It's none of my business how he plans on using that sword, but from my perspective, it's better to train my members than waste my time on him.

"I need to train them so that they can at least take care of themselves on the battlefield. Of course, if he performs well, it'll be great, but I don't see that happening anytime soon," she explained.

"I think he's worried about something… If he overcomes whatever he's going through, he'll probably perform better… What do you think? I mean—"

"About what? Are you really curious after seeing his attitude earlier?" she interrupted.

“No, I’m asking what you think about his physical ability or his talent. I don’t know much about his comprehension, knowledge, or his combat sense,” I clarified.

“…”

“…”

“To be honest…” she trailed off.

“Yeah?”

“His talent is excellent. Actually, I think it’s slightly above excellent. Even without the holy sword, he would have easily joined the Democratic Country’s Eight Seats,” she continued.

“*Hm…*”

‘It’s different from what Hyun-Sung said.’

I couldn’t help but feel kind of excited because Cha Hee-Ra’s evaluation of him was different from the parent-teacher conference I had with Kim Hyun-Sung. Kim Hyun-Sung even said that Rafael’s comprehension was only slightly better than a dull-witted man.

“I can’t even say for sure if I can train him properly. If I’m going to be a bit lenient, then I’ll say that he’s pretty average… Of course, I’ll have to wait and see, but in his current state… even if he borrows the power of the holy sword, I don’t think he’ll achieve the result you’re expecting.”

“What? Really?”

“Yes. He’s hopeless at the moment…”

‘It’s a good thing I asked Hee-Ra noona.’

I felt like I could finally understand those parents who were always happy to hear someone else praising their children.

I was kind of surprised by Kim Hyun-Sung’s blunt comment, but I figured he made that comment because he was the only one qualified to speak such words.

No one could easily meet his standards as he was a self-proclaimed genius of geniuses.

He and I thought that Rafael's swordsmanship was pathetic, but Cha Hee-Ra had a different opinion.

'I wouldn't really call Hee-Ra noona a genius.'

Of course, she was technically a genius, but her genius was more like her instinct. Her genius was the amalgamation of her instinct, experience, and pure power.

She thought that sophisticated swordsmanship wasn't that great, so it wasn't strange that her opinion differed from Kim Hyun-Sung's opinion.

'It's great that she acknowledged his talent at the very least.'

Cha Hee-Ra had vouched for Rafael's talent, so I was convinced that he would grow as long as he successfully overcame the crisis he was going through.

"It doesn't seem all that bad after hearing you say that. I feel relieved…" I told her.

"What's the point when he's in that state?" Cha Hee-Ra complained.

"I'm sure he'll get back on his feet soon. The personal issue Rafael is experiencing is something I'll help him resolve, so until then, don't be too hard on him, noona," I requested.

"You sure have a way with words. I've been going easy on him. It's the others who have been hard on him. Do I look like the bad cop? There are actually bad cops around. It seems that you still haven't seen how badly he's being treated at the other training grounds, Darling," she said.

"This is my first time watching him train…" I replied.

"Try going for a walk later. Anyway… Rafael isn't the only person with personal issues… How are you going to resolve *my* issues?" she questioned.

"Is there a problem with the guild?" I asked.

"No, I'm talking about my personal problem," she clarified.

"*Ah…* Well…" I mumbled.

"I'm trying to control myself, but I can't… Recently, my mind has been going blank and nothing really catches my attention, but funny enough, I thought about you. Do you understand what I'm saying?" she asked.

"Well…"

"I discovered that I lose my cool and act on instinct like an animal cub because I'm pent-up. I have been unable to release the pent-up desires in me, and it has become quite an issue, especially during important moments. You get it?" she questioned.

"…"

"You understand what I'm saying, right?" she repeated.

'No, I don't know what you're saying.'

"You understand me, right? Darling?" she asked.

"Somewhat… But you know… I've been wanting to examine your body…" I told her.

"Is that a hint?" she asked.

"No, I mean it, literally. I want to know what's making you run rampant," I replied.

"There's no need to figure it out because the answer is already there. My line of thought was wrong this entire time," she said.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"It means that I didn't really know how to get stronger. Training like a nerd is pretty useless," she answered.

"What?"

"Have you ever seen a beast train, Darling? Have you seen them practice or learn how to swing their claws or bite?" she asked.

"…"

“I changed my method to release the desire that filled my head. I’ll eat and shit well. I decided to live like a beast,” she clarified.

“…”

“I’ve decided not to suppress my thoughts whenever I see blood. There’s prey everywhere, and if I go to a dungeon or a nearby forest to fight to my heart’s content, I actually feel refreshed. That’s what I’m trying to say; you get it, right?” she asked.

I couldn’t remember how many times she had asked if I understood what she was saying, but I got the feeling that I had to nod.

‘She said she’s busy these days… was it because she had been doing whatever she wanted?’

I was sure that I was wrong, as she was still the leader of a guild. She probably meant that she was busy releasing her desires. Honestly, I doubted Cha Hee-Ra’s words, but I had to acknowledge her words after peeking at her stats using Mind’s Eye.

‘…’

She had become twice as strong. It seemed ridiculous that she had grown stronger just by staying true to her desires.

I was sure that those people whose motto in life was that one could do anything if one just put their mind to it would definitely fall in despair after seeing Cha Hee-Ra’s recent progress.

‘This isn’t fair.’

Damn it, what was happening?

“Anyway, that’s what happened, so keep that in mind. Hey, hand me that water,” Cha Hee-Ra asked.

“*Oh…* sure.”

I handed her the cup of water, but the cup shattered when she received it.

“Sorry, l can’t control my strength yet. I’ll get used to it soon, so don’t worry,” she

assured.

Honestly, I couldn't help but be worried about her.

"Let's leave him and go drink some wine. I prepared a nice one when I heard you were coming. I'm sure you'll like it. The wine was made from a potion, and surprisingly, you weren't the one who made the potion.

"It's been around for a long time, but it doesn't look that bad," she suggested.

'…'

"I understand what you're saying, but today is a bit…" I paused.

"Well, do whatever you want… I just need to stop by every week. You have business over there?" she asked.

"As always," I answered.

I couldn't help but be more worried about the coin that was showing signs of plummeting rather than Cha Hee-Ra's personal problem.

CHAPTER 622
TRUTH WITHOUT LIES (4)

Cha Hee-Ra's gaze bothered me, but I didn't feel comfortable looking back at her.

Moreover, my top priority was visiting Rafael, as we never really had a serious conversation since he ran out that day. I thought it would be best to leave him alone for the time being, but I wasn't happy about his plateau.

There were many different reasons why I hadn't visited him until now. I was acting like I had no idea that he was a spy for the demon contractors, so I had to do my part and stay in character while dealing with the situation.

I had to look like I was genuinely worried about him.

Anyway, it seemed that the future he had seen with the help of Kasugano Yuno had terrified him.

'It's a typical cliche.'

It wasn't my first time seeing the protagonist of an adventure movie becoming scared of moving forward. Honestly, I wasn't sure if Rafael knew about it, but the details were important, so I had no choice but to watch him from afar.

I was the supporting character who was hoping that our hero would overcome the trial by himself. Of course, it was different in real life.

'I don't care if he thinks that way.'

What mattered was that Rafael would realize why I was worried about him.

I approached him worriedly, and I saw his pale face. I found it absurd that he didn't obey Cha Hee-Ra's instruction to do the basic physical training routine and was staring into space.

His condition wasn't as bad as Kim Hyun-Sung during the Doom Ki-Young incident,

but he truly looked like he was deeply troubled.

'Actually, it's a bad comparison.'

I couldn't compare Rafael's condition to Kim Hyun-Sung's condition during that incident, as I only managed to fix Kim Hyun-Sung by entering his mind.

"*Um…*"

I tried to make my presence known, but it seemed that he failed to notice me.

"Mr. Rafael."

He looked back when I called out to him.

'How should I start this conversation?'

The good thing was that there wasn't much hostility in his eyes when he looked at me, but he did seem kind of suspicious of me.

"Are you okay?" I asked.

"*Ah…* hyung," Rafael said.

"You can rest a bit if you're not feeling well," I told him.

"No, it's not…" he paused.

"You don't have to overdo it," I said.

I poured my holy power into his ragged body, and he looked uneasy. He could see that I was using my holy power, but I was sure he was shocked to see himself recovering.

He could definitely feel that my holy power wasn't just ordinary holy power. It was pure, clean, and crystalline. The purity was extremely high as well, as it was mostly Benigoa's holy power. I didn't use that much holy power, but it was enough to heal superficial wounds and restore fatigue.

My expression started changing subtly as he stared at me, and it didn't take me that

long to figure out which expression was the best one. I decided to look troubled, and I made sure to look sympathetic.

I also made sure to look like I didn't want to send a young man like him to the battlefield, but I had no choice but to do so and hand him such a heavy responsibility.

The cogs in my mind turned and churned as I thought about how I would display so many emotions at once in just one expression, but the moment I decided to face Rafael with sincerity, the emotions poured out of me naturally.

It was a fact that I had no choice but to send this scared young man to the battlefield for the sake of everyone else on the continent. I was truly sympathetic toward Rafael, as he had to carry all the burdens and overcome his fear.

After all, he was the chosen warrior that the holy sword had chosen itself.

'Shit… '

It was a harsh reality, and I started crying without realizing it. I bit my lips to stop the tears from falling, but that was all I managed to do. I failed to hide my turbulent emotions.

"I'm sorry… I can't tell you that it's going to be fine… and that you don't have to fight," I said.

"It's okay, hyung…" Rafael said.

"I know you're scared," I said.

"…"

"And I know you were living a normal life until a few days ago," I continued.

"…"

"You should point your sword at them. They're cruel, self-righteous, and they want to bring humanity under their feet. They are threats to humanity. It's just like what you've seen, Mr. Rafael," I added.

"…"

“Many people will die at this rate. Once the heroes and soldiers are dead, the ordinary people on the continent are next. The elderly, the families dreaming of the future, the children looking at the backs of their parents, and the young people who still haven’t spread their wings yet. They will die upon being pierced by the demons’ spears,” I explained.

I stopped talking for a moment and looked at him.

It seemed that he was thinking about what he should do.

I looked far away as if suggesting that we take a walk, and Rafael nodded in response.

His face was screaming that his current condition wasn’t caused by the thing I was worried about. It became clear that he still had no idea just what kind of a person I was.

‘What are you thinking so hard about? It was exactly what you saw. Just stop thinking. If you do as I say, it’ll all work out in the end.’

He looked as if he were asking just what kind of person I truly was, and I even wanted to answer him.

‘Shouldn’t you trust the facts that you’ve seen with your own eyes more than the propaganda and fabrications made with baseless data? This is why instigation is scary, damn it.’

There was a saying that one statement was enough to instigate, but it would take hundreds of pieces of evidence to prove that such instigation was fabricated.

I couldn’t help but think that this quote was describing our current situation. I had proved to him many times that I wasn’t a bad guy, so I shouldn’t really feel anxious about it.

It would take some time, but I was aware that the truth would eventually win.

“I’m not… telling you to take responsibility,” I said.

“…”

“And I’m not telling you to stand in front of us,” I continued.

“…”

“Do you still remember what I said?” I asked.

“I do… hyung,” Rafael replied.

“…”

“I remember. To fight with you… until the end… and to not let go of the sword,” he mumbled.

“It’s natural to be afraid. Everyone is afraid of war, fights, and conflict. It’s the same for me. I’m scared of conflict, and I don’t want people to get hurt because of it. I’m scared that I might hurt someone with my own hands and that I might kill others,” I explained.

“…”

“I’m sure I’m not the only one. Everyone is afraid. The heroes facing invisible enemies at the zones, and those who are still training at the training grounds are afraid. We have different responsibilities, but we’re all afraid,” I continued.

“I see…” he commented.

“And there are others who will make mistakes because they’re afraid…” I added.

‘Like those demon advocates, for example.’

“I’m sure most of the soldiers have decided to face this fear head-on. They’re preparing to look directly at the shapeless enemy and raise their swords against it because they’ve been doing that for a long time,” I said.

“…”

“Yes, they’ve been doing that for quite a while now. I’m sure that’s how they fought even before I came to the continent. They were swept away in wars that those greedy people in power have waged, and they were driven out against their will, but… I’m sure each and every one of them raised their swords to protect the things they

wanted to protect."

"…"

"For my beloved family, my country, and my people. Everyone has different ideologies and values, but… those are the types of people who are currently here," I added.

"…"

"You'll experience hardship, but it's eventually going to happen. I believe we'll rise up and shout in victory like we've always done. That's why I'm not afraid. I'm not afraid because I believe in those who will be fighting with me," I told him.

I said whatever came to mind, but the reason why I wasn't afraid to fight on the battlefield couldn't possibly be because of the soldiers fighting with conviction. I could stand on the battlefield unafraid because I had support from people like Kim Hyun-Sung, Jung Ha-Yan, and Hee-Ra noona, who would always keep an eye on me.

'You need to have that kind of faith.'

"I believe that…" I trailed off.

"…"

"You understand what I'm saying, Mr. Rafael," I continued.

"…"

"I believe you'll overcome it and rise up with the gray holy sword. I believe… there's a reason why… Goddess Benigoa's sword… chose you," I said.

There was a moment of silence. I had done my best to encourage him so that he could overcome this, but it seemed to be ineffective. The doubt in his heart hadn't vanished, and my sugar coated words basically told him to go out there and fight on the battlefield.

Still, I couldn't let it end like this.

Light Ki-Young wasn't the type of person who would sacrifice himself for the group,

but he also wasn't the type of person who would be driven by profits.

I was a tender-hearted person, and I knew how to think as rationally as possible. I was also aware that sacrifices were necessary for the greater good, and I knew that it would be bad if I allowed my emotions to sway me.

And that was why I spoke softly and cautiously, "But…"

"…"

"But if you really don't want to fight…" I paused.

"…"

"You can go back…"

"Hyung…" Rafael muttered.

"I won't intervene if you decide to go back to your normal life… You deserve to live a life for yourself," I continued.

'If you don't want to fight, you can just leave. Of course, we'll all die if you're not here… but I just can't endure seeing someone as bright as you in pain. You understand what I'm saying, right? You know things will get awkward if you just leave, right?'

He probably wasn't even thinking about leaving because if he were to leave now, it meant that he would be turning his back on a long-cherished wish that had to be fulfilled. Regardless, I was sure my words echoed in him.

'But it was a pretty weak finishing blow… '

My statement wasn't that bad, given the context, and I also didn't forget to smile bitterly as I talked.

Rafael stood like a frozen statue.

I placed my hand on his shoulder and looked into his eyes.

'…'

He avoided my gaze.

'What?'

His shoulders were trembling, and he was clearly uncomfortable sensing my hand on his shoulders.

'Man, you… '

"…"

For some reason, it felt like he left a really big scar on my ego.

'You dare reject the light?'

I couldn't help but think that perhaps I had been too kind while playing this game. I wanted to laugh because it was so absurd, but I held back with all my might. I was tempted to just cut his head off because I didn't need him anymore.

I surreptitiously took a slow and steady breath.

My head was filled with many thoughts, but the first thought that popped into my head was this…

'All right, let's see who's going to win, you demon-contracting bastards.'

I decided to take this issue seriously.

CHAPTER 623
IT'S A LIE (1)

'Let's not get used to his kindness.'

"I have to question it," I[1] said.

'He's poison.'

"I have to be suspicious of him until the end," I reminded myself.

'Don't trust him no matter what. That's what I was taught.'

"His actions are a calculated act," I said.

'No need to feel agitated. Don't feel agitated. Don't feel agitated.'

I mumbled again as I looked in the mirror, but I was confused because I couldn't figure out what was going on. The more time I spent with Lee Ki-Young, the more doubtful I became as to what exactly was the truth.

"Demons wearing the mask of an angel…" I mumbled

I thought Benigoa's prophecy was a lie, so my mind went blank the moment I witnessed her prophecy, which I thought was fabricated to control people. Of course, there was a high chance that what I saw wasn't the truth.

I had heard a rumor that the shaman from Celia could see the future, but there was no proof that the future she had seen was set in stone.

Her truth was just too realistic. I was sure the truth she had shown me was fabricated as well and that they were just trying to control the chosen warrior. They were just trying to control me so that I would become a useful chess piece, but…

"But…" I paused.

I couldn't find any clues.

'What's going on? Is what I know really the truth?'

I couldn't help but start having doubts. I thought the daily life of a demon trying to take control of the continent would be filled with drinking with those in power, living a life of debauchery and gluttony.

Behind the scenes, I thought he had been enjoying the power, fame, and wealth he had garnered, but that wasn't the case. It hadn't been that long since I got here, but he didn't seem to be that kind of person.

Yes, Lee Ki-Young wasn't that kind of person.

'Why… why?'

"Why isn't he enjoying those things?"

Hadn't he come this far to enjoy those things? People would usually work hard for a goal, and they would enjoy the fruits of their labor afterward. However, Lee Ki-Young was the complete opposite.

He held the highest position, but he was working like he was at the bottom of the ladder.

He often spent time with the marginalized, and he had been giving everything he had to them. If Father Lee Ki-Young was truly a dictator obsessed with power, there was no way he could have done those things.

'I think he's just showing off.'

That was what I thought, but what kind of human beings would sacrifice themselves for a show? It was the same thing for the tasks related to the Continental Protection Management Committee.

He had never exercised his authority and power; he only made sacrifices.

He had only been using his power for the sake of the upcoming threat, and he used the enormous amount of money he had earned before accepting his position to build walls and supply the soldiers.

He used his power to protect the people rather than to take their freedom and rights.

He used his fame—not to raise himself up—but to reassure the marginalized and underprivileged. His daily life was more brutal than any soldier or people living on the continent. At least, that was what I noticed.

His work ethic was beyond any ordinary person's imagination, and it seemed like he was really… really working hard to prevent the destruction of the continent.

'That can't be… '

What if what I had seen so far was staged?

'If it's all staged, what is he trying to achieve by showing me those things?'

Actually… judging by the reactions of the people around him, he truly was extremely busy with an extremely tight schedule. I felt like an idiot because the truth that I had known so far was completely different from what was happening in this place right now.

'It was a lie? The leaders and the members believed in… were they all lies?'

I couldn't believe it, and that was why I couldn't let go of my doubts.

"Survive, Rafael. You shall be the only survivor."

"I'm sure it's not a lie," I said.

'If there were at least one person supporting us… it would have been… great… '

"There's no way he lied…" I told myself.

"Our goal is the liberation of the continent. The liberation of the continent from him."

"How can it all be lies? No way," I said in disbelief.

"You don't need to wield a sword, Rafael. We're the ones who should fight"

"It can't be all lies. I'm sure it's not. The time I spent with the members… are the truth…" I mumbled.

"Do you not believe us as well? The world you know is filled with lies and hypocrisy, kid."

"There's no reason for them to deceive me, and there's no reason for our leader to save me," I said.

"These are dangerous times, but… I think it's a good idea to take him with us. I can't just leave him like that. It's going to be dangerous, but I can't abandon my moral principles."

"I'm right," I told myself.

"I'll tell you my name later. Nice to meet you, kid."

"There's no way… our meeting was all a lie!" I roared.

"You can just call me Mister for now."

"There's no way… that it's a lie…!" I yelled.

Crack!

The mirror in front of me shattered and fell to the ground.

The different images of myself in the cracked mirror looked ridiculous. Perhaps it was because of my training, but I didn't feel any pain in my hand when I punched the mirror.

It was still painful, and I couldn't take it.

"*Heuuuk*…! What… What's the truth? Please tell me, Mister. If you're watching me, please tell me. Am I going crazy? Am I also being brainwashed, just like you said? Is Lee Ki-Young really the man you told me about? Please… Please tell me," I begged.

I wasn't expecting an answer.

"Please tell me… what I should believe. Please tell me that you didn't lie, Mister," I said.

Of course, I didn't hear an answer.

“You didn’t lie to me, right? It’s okay… for me to think that way, right?” I questioned.

I wiped my tears away and looked up. I couldn’t quite understand my own expression as I stared at myself in the mirror. However, I had no choice but to wipe my tears away, as it was almost time for me to meet Lee Ki-Young.

It was about time I learned the tasks of those affiliated with the Continental Protection Management Committee, and it was the only way I could find the answers to my burning questions.

I took a moment to compose myself before leaving the room.

As usual, Lee Ki-Young was smiling at me and was acting like his usual self.

He would always smile at me brightly, and his face was always filled with kindness, warmth, and concern. He was always trying to maintain that look. His expression had remained unchanging for so long that I felt as if his current expression was his permanent expression. In other words, I felt like he wasn’t faking it.

I hadn’t been able to concentrate on my training, but he understood me and sympathized with me. Right now, he was even worried about me.

He was probably sympathizing with me because I had to give up my previous life after becoming the chosen warrior.

‘I’m sure that’s not the only reason.’

I wanted to say that, but I couldn’t say it.

Regardless, the current situation was in my favor, and I should be happy about it. After all, I would be able to hide my worries, and I would also be able to gain his trust, which was one of the biggest objectives I had to do for the sake of advancing our cause.

“Are you feeling okay today?” Lee Ki-Young asked.

I quietly nodded in response.

“You seem tired, so I loosened up your schedule. Starting next week, you’ll have to visit the soldiers for a consolatory visit. You will also have to take a look at the

advanced bases with me," he informed.

"I see…" I said.

"We need to figure out what the soldiers at the base need the most and the best way to help them… Of course, I'm aware of all the recommendations that the supervisors are reporting to me, but it's kind of different when you're actually in the field. You can see what the soldiers really need there," he explained.

"I understand, hyung," I said.

"I'm sure your visit will give them a lot of strength, including those at the joint training site," he said.

"…"

"…"

"Are you feeling better now?" he asked.

"Yes, a little bit… I think I managed to overcome it. A little bit," I replied.

"Like I always tell you, don't overdo it," he reminded me.

"I'm fine, hyung. I think… you're overworking… more than me…" I mumbled.

I could tell that he was exhausted from his pallid demeanor alone. He was acting like he was okay, but his demeanor was the demeanor of someone who barely made it through a rigorous grind.

I was sure that his concern for me was affecting his health, as his health started worsening since he visited me here.

'Don't worry about him. It's none of my business.'

I should be happy that he was reaching his limits both physically and mentally.

"That's a relief," he said.

"What?"

“I’m just happy to see that you're back to your normal self, even if it’s just slightly. After that day, I noticed that you haven’t been eating properly… so I was really worried…” he explained.

“That’s because… you keep… taking care of me,” I mumbled.

That was the truth. After he realized that I was in a confused state, Chairman Lee Ki-Young made time out of his busy schedule to see me. He didn’t have an important reason behind it. He just wanted to spend his short breaks with me.

We would either drink tea or just talk about trivial things.

My head was still filled with various thoughts, but it was undeniable that his visits motivated me. Whether it was a lie or the truth, it was true that he had the ability to put other people’s minds at ease. I unknowingly smiled because he truly had that kind of power. I had been reminding myself that I had to avoid getting close to him and that he was like poison, but I still ended up accepting his kindness.

I looked up at Lee Ki-Young with a serious expression…

‘What is he doing now?’

He looked like he was staring off into space. I couldn’t really describe it, but it was as if he had briefly lost consciousness. He frowned and grabbed his head, and anyone with eyes could tell that there was something wrong going on here.

‘What’s going on… Where does it hurt?’

---

1. Rafael’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 624
IT'S A LIE (2)

This wasn't the first time that Lee Ki-Young acted like this. He would either stare out into space or stare blankly at something. I[1] never really thought of it seriously, and I assumed it was just his habit whenever he was deep in his thoughts.

However, something was strange this time.

'Something's up.'

Whenever this happened, he would be tapping his thigh as well, but right now, it was clear that something was wrong. It became obvious that he had been hiding something from me.

'What is it? What's he hiding?'

It was hard to describe the way he grabbed his head cautiously, as if he was in pain. To make matters worse, the duration of his blank stare had gotten longer. I felt like I had to say something, or he would keep staring out into space for a long time.

"Hyung…"

"…"

"Hyung, are you okay?" I asked.

"…"

"Hyung!" I shouted.

"*Ah!*… Yes?" Lee Ki-Young answered.

"Just now…" I said.

"Yeah… *Ah…* I… There was…" he stuttered.

"…"

"I'm fine—no need to worry. Don't worry about me," he said.

"But…"

"I'm really fine. It's because I haven't been able to sleep properly recently… so I think I'm just feeling a bit dizzy, so don't worry. I'll feel better once I rest a bit. This happens when things get busy for me… I-It's like a habit. Looks like… I startled you. I'm sorry, Mr. Rafael. *Ha… Hahaha*," he laughed.

'It's a lie.'

I wasn't certain, but I felt like he was lying to me because he was sensitive about what happened just now. He looked a bit disheveled, which was different from his usual perfect image. His face and actions screamed anxiety, and I wasn't sure what he was wary of, but he seemed extremely cautious.

It hadn't really been that long since we started hanging out, but from what I had seen of him so far, I became sure of one thing. The current Lee Ki-Young had just removed his mask.

He had thrown away his mask of perfectness and was displaying his true weakness.

The Lee Ki-Young I was seeing right now was probably the real Lee Ki-Young behind Father Lee Ki-Young, Chairman Lee Ki-Young, Sub Guild Master of the Blue Guild, the Continental Guardian, a Dragon's Chosen, and the loyal retainer of Benigoa.

'This is my chance.'

I was convinced that he didn't have any weaknesses, but he had just revealed his one and only weakness to me. I had no idea how long I had been waiting for this day. I approached him because I thought I would get a chance like this, but there was a bitter taste in my mouth now that the chance had appeared in front of me.

I didn't know why, but the bitter thought started creeping into my head.

"Are you sure you're okay? Just now, you…"

"Yes, I'm fine. You don't have to worry," Lee Ki-Young replied.

“But hyung…”

“Don’t worry about me. Really. More importantly… Let’s talk about something else…” he suggested.

‘He’s changing the subject.’

“What were we talking about?” he asked.

‘He’s getting nervous.’

“…”

“*Ah*, right. You seem tired, so I loosened up your schedule. Starting next week, you’ll have to visit the soldiers for a consolatory visit. You will also have to take a look at the advanced bases with me, so please be ready,” he repeated.

‘What?’

“We need to figure out what the soldiers at the base need the most and the best way to help them… Of course, I’m aware of all the recommendations that the supervisors are reporting to me, but it’s kind of different when you’re actually in the field. Not only you can see what the soldiers really need there, but…”

‘What are you talking about right now?’

“I-I… guarantee that your visit will give them a lot of strength,” he stammered.

‘What are you saying?’

Obviously, I remained quiet because he said the same thing a few minutes ago. No, he was telling me the exact same thing. It was so surprising that I failed to control my expression. I smiled for now, but… I wasn’t sure if he saw me smiling.

“I’m relieved,” Lee Ki-Young said.

“…”

“You seem to be feeling a bit more energetic. I think it’s been a while since I saw you smile like that,” he said.

Who would think of this situation as normal?

“So about today… can we proceed… with the plan? We can even spend time playing chess after we’re done with work. You can… think of it as a holiday,” he suggested.

“…”

“I’m sure you’re mentally exhausted with everything going on, so I want you to rest, at least for today. You can tell me if there’s any place you want to go as long as it won’t affect your training tomorrow… Yes… as long as… your training is not i-interrupted…”

“…”

“W-Wait…” he said.

“Hyung?”

“H-hold… on…” he mumbled.

“Hyung.”

“About… today’s schedule… I suddenly… remembered something important…” he said.

And that was when something stranger than what happened earlier occurred. Lee Ki-Young staggered, and he looked like he wanted to run away as fast as he could.

He moved faster than I thought.

I became nervous at the thought that something happened, so I unknowingly started following the person I wanted to get revenge on.

He looked like he wanted to get out of this place somehow.

The way he was stumbling against the wall made him look like he would fall to the ground anytime soon.

He was gasping for air and was holding his head with one hand.

He was making retching sounds while walking one step at a time. Eventually, he turned a corner and disappeared, so I had to move a bit faster because he obviously looked unstable.

'Is he okay? Is he… Is he hurt somewhere?'

Something was up, and I would see what he was hiding once I turned this corner.

'Is there a problem?'

I would soon find it… his one and only weakness, the card that would allow me to win this game, and the puzzle piece that would complete my revenge.

However, my mind went blank when I saw Lee Ki-Young lying in a long hallway.

'Huh?'

"Hyung?" I called out.

'What's going on?'

"Hyung… are you okay?" I asked.

I ran up to him to check his condition, but I saw a figure wielding two daggers. The air she was giving off made it obvious that she wouldn't allow me to get any closer to Lee Ki-Young.

I gulped upon seeing her.

I wasn't sure where she had come from, but she stood there as if she had been there the whole time. Obviously, I knew her. How could I not know her identity when she was like Lee Ki-Young's shadow?

"Please don't come any closer."

"Miss Park Lian?" I asked.

"I may use force when necessary," she warned.

"What?"

“Please go back the way you came quietly. I’ll let you know about today’s schedule shortly,” she informed.

“That’s… That’s not the issue right now. Ki-Young hyung is… F-For now…”

“I won’t repeat myself. Please return quietly,” she repeated.

“Move. We need to call for a priest. We have to do that right now,” I urged her.

“This is none of your business. I’ll take care of this, so please don’t worry, You just need to do your job, Mr. Rafael,” she told me.

“Move…” I told her.

“Please go back. I told you that I won’t repeat myself,” she repeated.

“I said… move!” I shouted.

Craaack!

I unknowingly charged toward her, but I felt the cold ground against my back, and I felt something cold on my neck.

I was pitifully sprawled out on the floor, and Park Lian was crushing me from above.

I had no idea how this happened.

All I remembered was that I spun in mid-air, and I was suddenly on the floor. The cold ground felt extremely cold against my face. I tried to move, but I couldn’t do anything because I was being restrained.

The sword sitting on my waist didn’t react to my will as if it were nothing but a mere decoration. I turned my head and found an unconscious Lee Ki-Young. I couldn’t believe it, even though I was staring at it with my own two eyes.

The Lee Ki-Young I knew was sprawled on the floor.

‘What are you doing right now?’

Why are you on the ground like that?

'You're the villain.'

Why are you curled up and gasping for air as if you're in pain?

'You're a tyrant trying to take control of the continent.'

Don't be like that. Stop acting in front of me…

'Get up. Get up right now.'

I know you're just pretending, and I know that you're just acting right now.

'So get up.'

He looked really weak—almost like a sick bird. The terrifying and frightening demon incarnate was strangely weak. He looked like he would break with a bit of force. Why hadn't I noticed that before? I wondered why I had never seen that side of him until now.

"Move…" I told her.

"I'll release you if you promise to go away," Park Lian said.

"I told you to move…" I said.

"Please forgive—"

"I told you to move!" I shouted.

Booooooooom!!

A gray light briefly pervaded the long hallway, and Park Lian was sent flying away. I immediately got up and tried to move, but Park Lian recovered quickly and aimed her daggers at my neck.

'She's fast.'

Her swordsmanship[2] skill was so fast that I couldn't react to it at my current level.

A flicker of light briefly fleeted across my mind.

“Please stop.”

I heard a familiar voice—it was *her* voice. The voice belonged to the woman holding up the unconscious Lee Ki-Young with a spear on her back.

“I’ll take care of this. Please cordon this area off, Miss Park Lian. Mr. Rafael, please return to your room and…” Jo Hye-Jin trailed off.

“…”

“You did not see anything today,” she asserted.

A fact unknown to the world and a truth that would never come to light. It was the moment when I witnessed a secret that Lee Ki-Young wanted to hide so badly.

“It’s a lie…” I mumbled.

“…”

“It’s… a lie…” I repeated.

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1. Rafael’s POV ☜

2. her job is a swordsman-type job, but she wields two daggers. ☜

CHAPTER 625
THE TRUE DARKNESS OF THE CONTINENT (1)

'Lies... '

As I[1] grabbed my head, an unknown anxiety filled me up.

My hands started trembling for some reason, and my breathing became ragged.

The man widely acclaimed to be the Incarnation of the Goddess was suffering from an unknown disease? I thought Lee Ki-Young was beloved by the goddess with the purest soul out there. They even called him Benigoa's son, but…

'He's sick?'

It was so absurd that I felt like fate was playing a joke with him.

I couldn't think clearly because the reality struck me.

While I was staring at the desk in front of me, I could hear a voice calling out to me from the other side. She didn't sound annoyed. She was extremely anxious, and she was having a hard time controlling her emotions, which betrayed her usual demeanor.

She was Jo Hye-Jin—the Blue Guild's third-in-command.

She was the Chief Secretary of the Blue Guild and was the most trusted party member of the Blue Guild. She was the type of person who didn't know how to compromise, and she valued principles above all else. I thought she was the type to remain calm no matter the situation, but at the moment, she couldn't hide her concern.

"What exactly happened? Please give me the details about how the sub guild master fell unconscious…" Jo Hye-Jin requested.

"…"

“Mr. Rafael?” she called out.

“…”

“Mr. Rafael,” she called out again.

“He spaced out… He was spacing out, and then he grabbed his head. We were talking as usual… He said it’s probably best to postpone today’s schedule… And then… And then… He looked… like he was about to faint…” I replied.

“What happened next…” she asked.

“I’m not sure. When I… followed him, hyung was already unconscious… You already know what happened next. Miss Park Lian… she blocked me… I thought something had happened to him… Is he okay?” I asked.

“…”

“Please tell me. He’s okay, right?” I questioned.

“Yes, he’s currently stabilizing. He’s still unconscious, but he’ll wake up soon,” she answered.

“Why aren’t you calling for a priest?” I asked.

“You don’t have to worry about it, Mr. Rafael,” she said.

“I asked why you’re not calling for a priest! Shouldn’t we do something about this?!” I yelled.

“If this can be resolved by calling for a priest, we would have done it already. Please don’t ask any more questions. Just remember this one thing—you didn’t see or hear anything today.

”Please don’t let anyone find out what happened today. Please…” she reminded.

“Stop the nonsense—”

“That’s what the sub guild master wants,” she interrupted.

"…"

"I want to see him," I requested.

"…"

"If you want me to keep the secret, then I believe I have the right to see him. I'm not trying to threaten or make a deal with you, but I have to know his exact condition. I have to see it with my own eyes…" I told her.

"…"

"I'll keep the secret. I swear it on my sword," I added.

"*Whoo…"*

"I… already have an idea. I just… need to check," I mumbled.

Jo Hye-Jin got up from her seat slowly with a determined face and a gaze filled with helplessness. All she did was turn around quietly, but I could tell that she had agreed to my request. I followed her quietly, and we soon reached a large door.

The door opened, and I saw Ki-Young hyung lying on the bed as if he were dead.

It was an unrealistic sight.

For some reason… For some reason, it looked unrealistic.

He didn't look any different from before. His face did seem a lot more relaxed, but his eyes were still closed. His slender wrists and haggard-looking face really made me think that he was dead. My hands trembled, and I bit my lips.

'There's no way… '

I had to check again. There was no way… There was no way someone like him was the demon trying to take control of the continent. There was no way that such a weak and frail person was a fraud who had been deceiving everyone.

He looked as if he wouldn't wake up anymore.

Someone in his condition couldn't possibly be…

'It must be a mistake. T-There must be a misunderstanding here!'

It wasn't that I didn't trust our leader, and I didn't think that he lied to us either, but there was something wrong here. I was missing an important puzzle piece… yes, I was sure of it.

"The sub guild master is…" Jo Hye-Jin paused.

"Yes?"

"Losing his memories," she continued.

"W-What do you mean…" I asked.

"It's like I said," she answered.

"…"

"Of course… *Hahaha*. It's not that serious. He's improving, and it's not as dangerous as you're probably thinking. it probably isn't that dangerous. Right now… he just forgets things that happened recently. So, it's not a big problem. H-He remembers… everything that happened a long time ago. He hasn't… forgotten anything," she explained.

She sounded like she was forcing herself to talk while holding back her tears.

'She's not lying.'

I could feel her sadness, and her voice sounded so sorrowful that it was making me feel sad. She sat on the bed quietly and grabbed hyung's hand before placing her own hand on his forehead.

She continued. "Whenever he complains about his headache while grabbing his head or whenever he spaces out, he'll usually fall asleep like this. The longest time he was ever asleep due to his condition was more than four days…"

"H-How did this happen?" I asked.

“The 27th Legion summoning incident,” she replied.

“…”

“I’m sure you know about that incident as well. He said that it’s a sequela after that incident… the demons…” she stammered.

‘…’

“I don’t know the details either,” she confessed.

Something was stirring inside me.

“How…” I mumbled.

“…”

“How—you know… since you know… why… why are you making him work so much?” I questioned.

‘It’s my fault.’

“You knew… b-but how could you make him do so much work?!” I asked.

‘It’s because of me… ’

“How… could you force all the responsibilities on him?!” I yelled.

If his illness was a sequela born from being exposed to demonic energy, the conflict with the Order had to have affected him negatively as well. The incident on that fateful day had to have been a deadly poison for him.

“Why are you making him work so hard?!” I shouted.

We had been attacking him incessantly. We had misunderstood him greatly when he had been sacrificing himself for the continent and had been living for the light.

I had been causing him pain again and again, and I had even forced him into a corner.

He was already at his limits, but I inflicted more pain on him.

“How can you… only think about yourself… Damn it!” I yelled.

I was yelling at myself.

It was a desperate scream… toward myself for not believing him until the end.

“Is this how you do things?! Is this… how you go about things… You guys corner one person… and bring him pain… Is that… *Heuk*… How could you…” I sobbed.

‘It’s my fault.’

“*Heuuuk…”*

‘T-this my fault… I did this.’

“Stop acting like a baby,” Jo Hye-Jin commented.

“What?”

“I told you to stop acting like a baby. Don’t assume things. The sub guild master decided it himself, saying that he had to leave something behind on the continent… He decided to do what he could for us… before his memories disappeared. We simply respected his decision,” she explained.

“Still…! Still—”

“Hey!” Jo Hye-Jin shouted.

I felt like I was getting strangled.

“…”

“Don’t treat my friend like he’s handicapped,” she warned.

“I’m not…”

“He decided this himself. Don’t talk as if you know what’s going on. You’ve only spent a few months with him compared to me, so don’t… talk like you actually know him. Don’t you dare tarnish his pride…” she trailed off.

"…"

"…with that foolish opinion of yours." she continued.

"*Heuk… Heuuuk… Kgh…*"

"…"

"Hyung… *Heuk…* Hyuuung…" I cried.

"Please leave," she said.

"*Heuuuuk…*"

"I asked you to leave. He needs to be stabilized. If you want to argue with me about this later, I'll make time. I trust you'll keep the secret, and…" she stopped.

"…"

"Do what you can. That'll… be helpful to him," she suggested.

My vision was getting blurry, and an enormous sense of responsibility was weighing down on me. I felt so weak that I wanted to collapse, but I couldn't do that. I was sure this woman wanted to cry more than anyone else.

She probably wanted to throw all caution to the wind and cry her heart out.

Jo Hye Jin was right. I didn't have the right to talk about Lee Ki-Young like that. I should actually be asking for his forgiveness. I had to get on my knees and… beg for his forgiveness.

My steps became heavy, and I walked one step at a time as I forcefully carried the emotions that I couldn't quite carry in my heart. My emotions ran wild, but my reasoning desperately repeated Jo Hye-Jin's words.

"Do what you can."

'I have to do whatever I can.'

To correct my mistakes…

‘What can I do… What can I do… ’

I had to complete this challenging puzzle.

Was I still suspicious of Ki-Young hyung? Of course not.

I was making a correction here—a correction.

‘I know now… hyung… ’

“…”

‘I think I finally found it, Mister. I think I finally found what we’ve been missing.’

Our leader’s investigation wasn’t accurate. The data I checked with my own eyes were valid and detailed enough to be used as actual evidence. The Order couldn’t possibly fail to find the truth amidst the rabble of falsity.

There were both exaggeration and malice, but the Order was undoubtedly pursuing the truth. However, the Order failed to realize that there could have been someone else behind the scenes instead of Lee Ki-Young.

Yes, there was someone else capable enough of controlling the media and was the leader of this discrete dictatorship. The one who caused all this and the one who inflicted so much pain on him had to be nearby.

There had to be a vermin next to him who had been deceiving him and had forced him into the spotlight for the Order to see.

‘Who is it?’

Who was the closest to him?

‘Who could it be?’

A person whose power was on par with him.

‘Think… ’

The only person on this continent capable of controlling Lee Ki-Young…

I thought of many different people, but the first person that popped up in my head automatically convinced me that he was the culprit.

I voiced his name out unknowingly.

“Kim…”

The real demon who had been controlling the continent and Ki-Young hyung.

“Kim Hyun-Sung…”

The puzzle was finally complete.

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1. Rafael’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 626
THE TRUE DARKNESS OF THE CONTINENT (2)

"Sub Guild Master? Are you awake? Sub Guild… Master?" Jo Hye-Jin asked.

"Why are you holding my hand? You're creeping me out," I[1] answered.

"I-I wasn't… holding your hand…" she stuttered.

"I'm still alive… Calm down," I assured her.

"…"

"Let's see… Miss Hye-Jin, are you crying?" I asked.

"S-Stop playing around. How can you joke at a time like this?" she scolded.

"I wasn't joking. I was merely speaking the truth," I said.

"Last time… you teased me the same way… I didn't cry. So… don't say things like that," she mumbled.

'If I really wanted to joke around, I wouldn't have ended it here.'

I probably would have said the lines she said earlier.

"Don't talk like you know what's going on."

'Wow… '

"Don't tarnish his pride."

'Wow, Hye-Jin. Shit… Hye-Jiiiin… I never knew you thought of me that way.'

What she said almost made me smile—no, cry. My face flushed red as I was lying on the bed. It was definitely the highlight of this plan and the decisive blow that ended

the crisis.

I knew I was building a beautiful friendship with Jo Hye-Jin, but I couldn't help but think that our friendship was finally complete.

Obviously, I felt kind of bad for dragging her to the stage, but I smiled warmly when I achieved the result I was expecting. Realism was the most important when it came to this type of setup, and it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that Jo Hye-Jin made all this happen.

'What is he going to do about it? Rafael is a nobody… Why even put up a wall?'

I prepared a lot because I thought it was going to be difficult to break the wall down, but his wall collapsed before I could even use my cards. When I recalled how he called me hyung while crying, I felt like an idiot for preparing *too* much.

'I shouldn't have asked to prepare the Light Ki-Yeon card.'

Lee Ji-Hye even asked if I had awakened into a new hobby.

She even told me that she would prepare a fairy for herself…

'Eh, whatever. As long as the result is satisfactory.'

It was a huge success because Rafael was probably being tormented by his mistake at the moment. I was sure that he would soon grovel for forgiveness. Obviously, he wouldn't reveal the fact that he was with the demon contractors, but he would definitely beg for forgiveness while crying.

Moreover, for me…

'It'll be great if he doesn't reveal it.'

It was easier to control those with heavier burdens. I was sure he would feel guilty for the rest of his life, and I didn't really need to relieve him from that feeling. I thought it would be best for me to actively stop him from confessing.

Now that I thought about it, it was kind of similar to our lovely regressor's situation back then.

'Pffft… Hahahahahaha.'

I finally felt like things were going smoothly. I would have toast to this if I could, but my precious friend in front of me probably wouldn't allow me to drink any alcohol.

'My heart feels warm seeing her tear-streaked face. Thanks, Hye-Jin. You really contributed a lot. Once I'm done with the urgent tasks… I'll become your avatar one more time since you deserve a reward, too.'

"What's with that creepy smile?" Jo Hye-Jin asked.

"It's nothing. I just feel happy… at the thought that I have someone I can rely on. I'm human, too… so it's natural for me to be happy about things like that," I answered.

"How… are your memories?" she asked.

"I don't feel like I'm in the dark. I think I remember everything, even the things that happened before I became unconscious. Has it been… a week or something since I woke up or something…" I asked.

"No. It hasn't even been three hours, so don't worry. You weren't in the situation you're thinking about," she replied.

"And Rafael…" I asked.

"I'm sorry," she said.

'You have nothing to apologize for. Our Hye-Jin is a really responsible person… Did you feel that bad about breaking your promise? But it couldn't be helped, right?'

"So he found out," I said

"He assured me that he wouldn't tell anyone. He even swore on the holy sword, so you don't have to worry about people finding out, but…" she trailed off.

"Yes?"

"How long are you going to hide this for?" she asked.

"I thought we already talked about this?" I asked her.

“Don’t interpret our conversation back then in a way that is only advantageous to you. I clearly told you that I would tell the guild master if something serious happened,” she scolded.

“*Ah*, is that what you said? I don’t really remember…” I said.

“Don’t pull shitty tricks that’ll give me a heart attack. I’m being serious right now,” she warned.

‘Hye-Jin… ’

“It wasn’t anything serious… so you won’t be telling him,” I said.

“No, this is really serious,” she said.

“No, it’s not serious. I won’t deny the fact that my head kind of hurt earlier, but I managed to get up pretty quickly, didn’t I? There’s nothing wrong with me physically and mentally. I just need more sleep. There’s nothing wrong with me, so don’t worry,” I reassured her.

“…”

‘I’m not lying here.’

“Everything will be resolved if I just drink one bottle of the fatigue recovery potion,” I added.

“You sure talk a lot for someone who spoils themselves with that potion. Anyway, I’m really serious. This is the last time,” she warned.

“What?” I asked.

“This is the last time I’m going to turn a blind eye,” she clarified.

‘Sure.’

“I assure you that if something like this happens again next time, I’m going to notify the guild right away. I-I… no longer have the confidence to watch over you. I can’t stand it, and it really makes me nervous.

”What are you going to do if something like this happens during my absence? What would you have done if something like this happened while you were confronting an enemy? What if… What if…” she stuttered.

It would never happen, as Jo Hye-Jin’s arrival was within my calculations as well as the possible variables that could interfere with the big picture.

I wanted to argue and say that nothing was going to happen, but I decided to listen to Jo Hye-Jin for now. I just need to be careful so that this wouldn’t happen again. It would actually be problematic if the gods up there really called me to their side, but there weren’t any problems on Benigoa’s side, so I decided to enjoy this moment.

“Even if Miss Lian is always with you… this is still too risky. This is really dangerous, even on Earth. If you faint while riding a griffon or performing alchemy experiments, things will quickly turn ugly. I really think you should take your occasional fainting seriously, Sub Guild Master,” Jo Hye-Jin argued.

“I’m very aware of that. So… *ahem*, please stop nagging. I already told you that I take care of myself better than anyone,” I told her.

“*Whoo*… I know that, but… Anyway… have you made any progress in the Zone Five research? Are you sure it’s going to help? Are you sure I just need to keep watching?” she asked.

“I’ve made some progress, so stop worrying. It’ll be your loss for worrying about someone like me,” I answered.

“Don’t say things like that. You think I want to worry about you because I want to? Anyway… I think it’s best if I stay with you today,” she suggested.

“You’re not asking me out on a date, are you?” I asked jokingly.

“Crazy bastard,” she commented.

“Please don’t curse,” I said.

“Then don’t say things that’ll make me curse. And I canceled all of your plans today, so keep that in mind. I’m going to contact the guild master,” she informed.

“…”

“Don’t look at me with those eyes. I’m just going to tell him that it might be difficult for me to return today,” she said.

“All right. If he’s worrying about silly things, please tell him that I’ll visit him soon,” I ordered.

“Okay.”

Jo Hye-Jin nodded and left the room.

I clenched my fists and celebrated my small victory.

I was kind of sad that all my plans today got canceled, but I honestly needed a break as well, especially on a day like today when I had made some achievements. Wouldn’t enjoying a party with Jo Hye-Jin be the best way to spend the rest of today?

‘Rafael needs time to himself as well… ’

He seemed kind of mentally disturbed for other reasons, but it was nothing I had to feel anxious about because the situation was basically over. I just had to comfort and encourage him while patting his head, and I was convinced that he wouldn’t have a hard time returning to his daily life.

Now that I thought about it, I forgot to ask Jo Hye-Jin about where Rafael was at the moment.

‘I wonder if he’s crying in his bed.’

I grabbed my Goddess’ Hand Mirror while thinking that that was most likely what he was doing, but… I couldn’t see him in the mirror.

‘Is he in a private practice room? Is our warrior already over it? You’ve decided to kill demons, right? I knew you had it in you, our warrior of gray light!’

I moved my finger again at the thought that he was mentally stronger than I thought, but I couldn’t see him anywhere. I couldn’t find Rafael in the library, the private garden, the cafeteria, or anywhere. I thought it wasn’t a big deal, but I was starting to get nervous. I was celebrating my victory here, but this incident had just subverted Rafael’s beliefs.

'No… I'm overthinking it.'

I didn't raise him to become an irresponsible person incapable of atoning for his sins.

I thought perhaps Jo Hye-Jin gave him a task in my place, and Jo Hye-Jin returned just in time.

"I got his permission. As you mentioned, he seemed to be worried about something, so I told him that you were going to visit him soon. He asked me to tell you to visit him when you have time and… to take care of yourself," Jo Hye-Jin informed.

"That's good. By the way, Miss Hye-Jin," I called out.

"Yes?"

"Where's Rafael?" I asked.

"Ah, I forgot to tell you, but he said that he wanted to train by himself… so he's probably heading to Lindel right now," she replied.

"When you say Lindel…" I paused.

"That's right. The guild master agreed to make time for him," she said.

"Is Mr. Hyun-Sung available?" I asked.

'Hey… you're not trying to tell Kim Hyun-Sung, are you?'

I started to feel a strange, inscrutable nervousness, but I immediately shook my head.

Rafael swore on the holy sword that he wouldn't reveal my secret. Rather than rushing to reveal my secret, I was convinced that there was a different reason behind his decision to immediately start training.

Obviously, he and I both knew the reason.

'Pain is a blessing for the youth.'

He couldn't ignore it. He had to do something about it.

1. Lee Ki-Young's POV ☜

CHAPTER 627
THE TRUE DARKNESS OF THE CONTINENT (3)

Jo Hye-Jin's last words to him were probably the key.

"Do what you can. That'll be helpful to him."

I was sure Rafael had finally realized it. An important figure once said that a busy bee would have no time for sorrow, and it described Rafael perfectly. He probably thought that training until his fleshly body was broken was the only way he could repay me.

I wasn't sure, but I started nodding at that idea of mine when I saw him.

- *AAAHHH!*

-…

- Shit… shit…

-…

- *AAAARGH!*

'This is too brutal.'

I knew he would do something like this, but this was a bit too much. I couldn't quite describe his current condition, but he was obviously regretting his past decision and was atoning for it.

It was ridiculous how he was just swinging his sword, and it was more like he was releasing his anger than actually learning the sword. He had been swinging his sword over the past four days. It was probably why he decided to go to Lindel.

'I actually don't know if he's going to learn anything doing just that.'

I was ignorant with basically zero swordsmanship, but I still felt that way while staring at Rafael. I could only imagine Kim Hyun-Sung's feelings. As expected, he was frowning. He obviously didn't like Rafael, but…

'He's helping him out pretty well.'

He truly wanted to teach Rafael the sword, and I could see him holding back whenever they sparred. If Kim Hyun-Sung decided to use even a portion of his true strength, I was sure Rafael would have flown into the horizon.

Rafael had to use the gray light to fight, but Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't using even a particle of mana. He used only his swordsmanship and was fighting Rafael using the basic, fundamental moves and footwork.

'He's pretty amazing.'

Kim Hyun-Sung's breathing was even as he casually blocked Rafael's attacks while Rafael was giving it his all to leave even a small scratch on him.

They were in a small circle that limited their movements, but Rafael couldn't quite break Kim Hyun-Sung's defenses. In the end, Rafael got exhausted. He was worn out, but he didn't let go of his sword.

'So he did make up his mind.'

Otherwise, he wouldn't have been fighting like that.

- We'll end it here for today.

- *Haa… haa…*

- You're such a mess that I don't even know what to say. Have you forgotten what you've learned so far?

-…

- If you keep—

- *AAAHHH!*

-…

Rafael interrupted Kim Hyun-Sung's blunt words. However, Rafael found himself rolling on the ground. He started squirming and groaning while holding his torso.

- I don't know if you're tenacious or stupid, but… today's lesson is over. Even if we continue the lesson, I don't think you'll make much progress… Do the final part of the training on your own and get ready to eat.

- *Haa… haa…*

'As expected, our Hyun-Sung is strong.'

He wasn't even sweating. Obviously, it wasn't *that* amazing seeing that his opponent was Rafael, but despite the handicap, he still managed to defeat Rafael without receiving even a single scratch.

I noticed through the Goddess' Hand Mirror that Kim Hyun-Sung quickly entered the building after ending the lesson. I expected him to come to this room immediately, and as soon as I put away the hand mirror, I heard knocking on the door.

"Mr. Ki-Young," Kim Hyun-Sung called out.

"Please come in," I answered.

Kim Hyun-Sung entered the room slowly.

"I heard you're here. It's been a while since you visited the guild," he said.

'It hasn't been that long since you started living here, too.'

"I can't help but be conscious of the situation. As the chairman of the Continental Protection Management Committee, it'll appear that I'm being biased toward a particular guild if I were to stay here for a long time.

"Of course, everyone knows that I haven't completely abandoned the Blue Guild, but I'm worried about the public eye," I explained.

"I'm aware of that, but—"

“I’m really surprised to see that my room hasn’t really changed,” I interrupted him.

“Miss Hee-Young has been taking care of your room, and she made sure to make your room appear similar to when you just left. Miss Kim Mi-Young cleaned your room after hearing the news that you were coming,” he said.

I looked around, and the room truly looked exactly the same as when I left it. The enormously large shelf was still there, and the elegantly decorated interior hadn’t changed as well.

The room still didn’t have any windows, and the place still looked like a prison cell.

When I looked at the wall, the memories of that day came vividly. One thing that changed was that there was a new item inside the display. Perhaps it was because I noticed it, but Kim Hyun-Sung smiled warmly at me.

His demeanor looked completely different from when he was talking to Rafael earlier, but this was how Kim Hyun-Sung usually acted. He had to be happy about my visit.

‘Not bad.’

I wanted to visit as well because Lindel was the only place I could call my hometown on the continent. I helped with the city restoration, so I had an idea as to how Lindel changed, but it was still different from seeing it with my own eyes.

The city was full of life, and it was restored so perfectly that it had even surpassed its original feel and look before it was destroyed.

The development was so amazing that it made me think about how long it had been since I had taken a proper look at the city.

Comparing it to the ruins of the old days made me doubt my eyes.

I was really surprised when I saw Lindel while riding my griffon.

‘It’s a good thing I came here.’

I only visited Lindel because of Rafael, but I was glad that I visited the place. More importantly, Kim Hyun-Sung’s reaction wasn’t that bad as well, so it felt like I

managed to hit three birds with one stone.

"I'll be really busy for the foreseeable future, so it's a good thing that I came here while I'm still not that busy," I commented.

"Yes, you really are busy… I even heard from Miss Hye-Jin that you've been sacrificing sleep. I think you should rest for a bit…" Kim Hyun-Sung suggested.

'Why is Jo Hye-Jin saying silly things to him?'

"*Haha*… I'm fine. I've been taking care of my health. I rested yesterday as well… and I'm basically resting right now. By the way, how are things?" I asked.

"Excuse me?"

"How's Rafael?" I asked.

"…"

"…"

"I'm not sure," he replied.

"…"

"I think he's gradually improving. He's not that talented, but… I can see that he wants to become stronger… Normally, people like him have high growth expectations for themselves, but his growth potential is limited…" he continued.

"…"

"Basically, Rafael will become stronger, but I doubt he'll grow to *that* level," he added.

"*Ah…*"

"I'm sure you're disappointed, but…"

'Do I not have any other choice but to give up on using him as a tactical Rafael?'

Of course, this was Kim Hyun-Sung's personal opinion, but even I couldn't imagine

using the current Rafael as part of *that* strategy.

“He lacks experience,” I commented.

“Yes! That’s exactly right,” he said.

I had built the framework, but Kim Hyun-Sung was the one who would carry out the mission. If I gave the order to reach a destination called A, he was fully responsible for carrying out that order.

Of course, I would provide him with as many details as possible about what was happening on the battlefield and provide him with all the support available to me, but an unknown variable could pop up at any time.

This was before talking about one’s physical ability or stats. In other words, it would be really difficult for anyone to carry out my orders unless they were Kim Hyun-Sung, who suffered in hell, which was his past life.

‘But it’s bad to give up hope so quickly… ’

“I think it’s best if we decide after seeing him take his own path and seeing his growth after a certain period of time. It’s still too early to make a decision. Let’s eat. I’m sure you’ve been waiting for a long time. I prepared delicious food,” he suggested.

“It’s been a while since I’ve eaten at the guild, so this is refreshing. It also reminds me of the old days. Of course, I haven’t spent a lot of time in the newly built guild house, but it feels nostalgic,” I said.

“How about you stay here for a bit? If you’re not busy today…” he proposed.

“I’m not sure. I’ll have to… check my schedule. I’d like to spend more time in the restored Lindel, but I don’t know what kind of accident might happen at the site…” I told him.

“Right, it’s because of *that* incident…” he muttered.

‘Hyun-Sung is sad.’

I thought that it wouldn’t be a bad idea to spend a day here, as I needed to talk to Miss Kim Mi-Young and Miss Sun Hee-Young as well. Of course, the primary reason I

thought that way was Kim Hyun-Sung's reaction.

However, I was here to visit Rafael, not Kim Hyun-Sung.

I was here to visit the one who had been hiding from me and was trying his best to forget the pain.

'He's basically saying he won't be able to endure it if he sees me… our meeting will make him feel even guiltier.'

Still, I was surprised to know that he had trained like crazy over the past few days.

And that was when I heard knocking on the door…

'It must be Rafael.'

I was worried that he was avoiding me, but it seemed that I was mistaken, as he had come here to visit me himself. I could hear his hesitant voice outside the door.

"Come in," I said.

The door opened slowly, and a blanket of awkwardness draped over the two of us as this was our first meeting since that incident.

'This is nothing… '

This was obviously nothing compared to Rafael's feelings.

He ran here as if he were being chased, and it was clear that he didn't have the confidence to face me.

I thought he would have no idea what kind of expression he should use while staring at me, what he should say, how he should express his feelings, and how he should apologize. However, the reality was different from what I thought.

He looked desperate, and he looked extremely worried about me.

'I mean, this isn't bad either… '

I thought he wasn't ready yet, but he had to have figured that I came here because of

him. Rafael released a big sigh of relief after seeing that I was in good shape. I did think about how I should react as well, but the best reaction in this kind of situation was…

'Smiling brightly as if nothing happened… '

Acting like my usual self was more effective than anything.

My smile was definitely making him feel guilty.

"I… I…" Rafael stuttered.

He couldn't even make eye contact with me.

"I-I… S-So…" he mumbled.

"It's fine, Mr. Rafael," I said.

"O-Okay, hyung."

"Everything is… okay," I told him.

"*Heuk, heuuuk…"* he cried.

Rafael managed to talk while holding back tears.

I patted his shoulder quietly, and his head dropped, then he started trembling. It was also absurd how he started crying. Kim Hyun-Sung was pretty confused by the sudden soap opera-like scene, but…

'I can just tell him a reasonable excuse later.'

Sometime later, Rafael barely managed to pull himself together. He cast a puzzled look at me, but it was quickly replaced by disbelief when he finally had the luxury to look around.

'Is it because of the expensive furniture? The room is pretty big, right? It's okay. I can explain everything.'

I would have flinched, but there wasn't any need for me to do that, as Rafael already

looked like he had lost his soul. He tugged on my sleeve nervously, and I figured that there was no need for me to react to his every action.

“Hyung, w-w-where are we…”

Speak with confidence, man. Rafael’s stuttering kind of bothered me, but… there wouldn’t be any harm if I acted confidently.

“This used to be my room,” I told him.

Rafael nodded slowly, but he looked like he would start crying once more.

CHAPTER 628
THE TRUE DARKNESS OF THE CONTINENT (4)

The room had zero windows.

'No way... '

There wasn't a single ray of light in the room.

Like Kim Hyun-Sung's nickname, Sunset Swordsman, the room was filled with artificial light, which made it feel alien. It gave off a bad vibe. It was dark and stuffy. The room was so disgusting I couldn't breathe properly in it. It was so surreal I couldn't help but think that I had to be dreaming.

There were endless rows of luxury items… It seemed like every expensive item on the continent was here.

'They look pristine; they look like they have never been used.'

The way Hyung was positioned in the center of something so gorgeous that it felt artificial made him look like a bird trapped in a fancy birdcage.

'Why… Why is there a lock outside? How come… there aren't any windows?'

The answer was already there, so I[1] didn't have to guess.

So the Blue Guild had been treating him like this…

'And what's with that necklace?'

It looked like an artifact carved with a location-tracking spell. Was that necessary?

'He's… been living in a place like this?'

I wasn't sure how long he had been staying here, but the sanest person out there was bound to have mental issues if they stayed here even for just two weeks.

He was surrounded by countless treasures and luxurious items, but I didn't think that anyone out there would be happy to stay in a room like this, not to mention him.

I told myself to hold it in and was determined not to show any more strange behavior, but I couldn't hold in my tears. This place was abnormal, and it wasn't supposed to exist. My hands started shaking at the thought of swinging my sword and destroying everything.

'What are the Blue Guild members doing? Jo Hye-Jin. Did that woman know? What the hell are the others doing?'

Wasn't it clear that he was being detained? People were keeping tabs on him, and he was being oppressed. It turned out that Father Lee Ki-Young had been living this kind of life by himself.

'Do the guild members that trust and follow him know about this?'

Was Jung Ha-Yan—Hyung's girlfriend—aware of this room? There was a chance that she might have even cooperated with that devil. I wanted to trust Jo Hye-Jin, but it felt like this birdcage was telling me not to trust anyone here.

The most ridiculous part about all this was Hyung's reaction.

"The guild prepared this room for me. It's a bit uncomfortable, so… I don't really stay here for a long time," Lee Ki-Young said.

"…"

"It's also too big for me. Anyway, we should go outside. *Haha*," he laughed.

'He has no idea!'

He looked naive—unaware of the atrocity being committed against him.

'I don't think he's dumb enough that he would fail to notice these things.'

He could be considered dumb because of his self-sacrificial tendencies, but he wasn't dumb. I had to think about what was going on. I had to deduce why he couldn't see how the Blue Guild was treating him.

Perhaps… perhaps he was brainwashed with a spell, and losing his memories could be a side effect of that spell.

I thought of the possibility, but I shook my head. I had never heard nor seen of a spell capable of completely brainwashing an individual. Not only was it unlikely, I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung wouldn't want that to happen.

I was sure he didn't want Lee Ki-Young to be just a mere puppet. He wanted to take his time and slowly but surely stain Lee Ki-Young's pure white canvas with his disgusting, dirty colors. He definitely wanted to enjoy the journey of corrupting him.

'Despicable bastard. He's an asshole who wants to have his cake and eat it, too.'

"Are you okay, Mr. Rafael? Right now—"

"I'm fine, hyung," I said, interrupting him.

"You don't look so good. How about you go back to your room and rest?" Lee Ki-Young suggested.

"No, I-I'll stay with you," I stuttered.

"If you get uncomfortable, feel free to let me know," he said.

"I'm not uncomfortable at all," I told him.

'I can't let him be alone with that asshole.'

"…"

"…"

"Let's get going, Mr. Ki-Young," Kim Hyun-Sung suggested.

"Okay."

Kim Hyun-Sung's cold eyes were filled with warmth today. He was even smiling. His personality and behavior today were so fake that it was painful.

He was definitely wearing a mask.

I was sure of it.

If this evil bastard hadn't used any spells, potions, or anything else to brainwash Ki-Young hyung, he had to have used something more subtle.

He was making Hyung move in a natural manner, but in a way that would make Ki-Young hyung feel as though he wasn't capable of making his own sound judgment.

He was definitely trying to lead Hyung to ruin. This scheming bastard was definitely in the middle of a shady scheme. It made even more sense when I thought about how they had been together since their tutorial dungeon days.

A powerful person could easily exert influence over those weaker than them during a crisis. He had to have been consistently fabricating scenarios where Hyung had no choice but to keep on relying on him because he was strong.

In the end, Hyung completely trusted him.

This evil bastard got his cake and was now eating it.

The truth was laid bare and was clear as day, so it was surprising how we didn't notice it sooner rather than later.

'There were so many weird parts as well.'

I looked back on Kim Hyun-Sung's activities.

During the Democratic Country's revolution, the Laios incident, and even during the demon worshiper Ito Sota's incident, I realized that…

'He wasn't there… '

He would always arrive late, and no one had any idea what he had been doing in the meantime.

I started questioning that perhaps he was the real demon who was trying to control the continent and plunge it into chaos. I had to be correct because the evidence couldn't be more solid than this.

'What should I do? What… should I… How do I save Ki-Young hyung?'

How could I save him from this man? Would I succeed if I unsheathed my sword and aimed for his head right now? Could I even defeat him? I thought of many possibilities, but the possibility of success remained zero.

This evil bastard was so strong that there was no way I could defeat him at the moment.

Even if I got lucky and he put his guard down, I was sure that he would somehow manage to kill me first before I could swing my sword. It was frustrating, but Kim Hyun-Sung was just *that* strong.

'What if I try to convince him… '

"You really didn't have to prepare these. Thank you, Mr. Hyun-Sung," Lee Ki-Young said.

'It won't work.'

I knew that it wouldn't work the moment I saw Hyung's bright smile.

'It's impossible.'

There wasn't even an ounce of suspicion in his eyes, and he had never smiled like that in front of me. If I told him the truth about Kim Hyun-Sung, he would definitely not listen to me, not to mention believe me. He would say that it was all a misunderstanding and Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't that type of person.

"The credit belongs to the guild staffers," he said.

He had definitely deceived many people with that facade of his.

"Thank you for the food. Please eat, Mr. Rafael," he offered.

"Thank you, hyung."

It was a lavish dinner that made the large table seem small.

'Evil bastard.'

Ki-Young hyung wasn't the one who had been living a luxurious life while tapping

into the bountiful resources from all over the continent.

'If only I was strong enough… If I was just strong enough to fight… '

I carved the thought of becoming even stronger into my heart and soul.

'I-I have to become even stronger. I'm sure an opportunity will come. I just have to wait. I'm sure of it. I'm sure I can kill him.'

However, how long was I supposed to wait? The situation would only get worse over time. Darkness would keep on gnawing away at Hyung's sanity and soul, while this evil bastard's influence would only keep on growing.

'He needs to run. He needs to get away from here.'

That was the best method I could think of at the moment, but even that wasn't easy to execute.

"How's… the food? Is it to your liking, Mr. Rafael?" Lee Ki-Young asked.

"Y-Yes, hyung," I answered.

Would he follow me? No, do I even have the right to save him? I-I was the biggest sinner here.

"Good job with your training today. I'm sure it was difficult… I'm happy that you're handling it just fine. You too, Mr. Hyun-Sung. I'm saying this just in case, but I'd like it if the two of you would get along a bit better.

"I don't think it's a bad idea to spend time like this from time to time. If possible, I think we should summon all the guild members here so that we can eat together and have fun," he suggested.

"…"

"…"

"More importantly, I was really happy when I learned that you decided to come here yourself, Mr. Rafael. After I'm done with all my work, I was hoping you'd come to the guild with me when I return. Isn't that right, Mr. Hyun-Sung?" he asked.

Kim Hyun-Sung didn't answer.

Hyung didn't mind it and continued talking until we eventually heard knocking on the door.

"Excuse me, Guild Master."

"Come in."

"Miss Park Yeon-Joo of the Black Swan Guild contacted the guild urgently to say that there was a matter she needed to briefly discuss," a staffer said.

"Today, I—"

"I'm sorry, but she said it was a really urgent matter…" the staffer interrupted.

"Tell her that I'll contact her soon," Kim Hyun-Sung ordered.

"It's okay, Mr. Hyun-Sung. You can go and take care of it," Lee Ki-Young chimed in.

"*Whoo…*"

"I think she just wants to check up on you, so it shouldn't take long. Go ahead," he added.

"Well, since you said so… excuse me," he said.

Kim Hyun-Sung had no choice but to leave.

'Is this my chance?'

Ki-Young hyung and I were left alone.

I unknowingly started talking because I had to know just what he thought about that evil bastard.

"Hyung…"

"Yes?"

“What kind of person is the Blue Guild’s guild master?” I asked.

“Why do you ask?” he questioned.

“I’m just curious. I want to know what you think of him… I don’t really know him, after all,” I answered.

“Well…” he paused.

“…”

“He’s a reliable person. He’s drastically different on the outside and inside,” he continued.

“…”

“Once you spend more time with him, you’ll realize soon enough that there’s more to him than meets the eye. He looks strong, but he surprisingly has a soft side, and he is carrying a lot of burden on his shoulders.

”Despite his stoic demeanor, he actually likes cheesy jokes, which is hilarious. Anyway, I’m really, really—really glad that I met him. It was my honor that I got to work with him, and he’s someone whom I really trust from the bottom of my heart,” he added.

“…”

“He’s also a good friend of mine,” he said.

“…”

I had no idea what to say.

Hyung’s expression made it clear that convincing him with words was impossible.

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1. Rafael’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 629
THE TRUE DARKNESS OF THE CONTINENT (5)

I had a lot to say about Kim Hyun-Sung, but my words just now basically summed it up.

To be honest, I wasn't quite used to describing Kim Hyun-Sung to other people. When the Blue Guild was still part of the developing holy empire, I introduced him to many powerful figures, but this one was different.

The mood, setting, and context were different, so the question was ambiguous.

Rafael asked what kind of person Kim Hyun-Sung was, and even though I pondered for a bit, I was convinced that I gave him a pretty good answer. He was sometimes cold because of his past life's influence, but he was basically a friendly and warm person.

If one knew about Kim Hyun-Sung's past life, one would be able to easily deduce just what kind of a person he was. I was convinced that I already knew the real Kim Hyun-Sung.

He was changing as time went on, but human nature wouldn't change that easily. He had gotten ridiculously stronger, but he was still a scaredy cat. He valued relationships, and he would always do his best when it came to tasks assigned to him.

He was an honest man with not even a single sleazy trick up his sleeve, and he would never hesitate when it came to doing something he believed was right.

I was being honest when I told Rafael that I was glad to have met him and that he was trustworthy. My heart felt warm when I said it. *'Aww, our Hyun-Sung. What would I have done without you… '*

I wonder what would have happened if I hadn't met him in the tutorial dungeon.

The thought of it alone made me feel sick. There was no way I would have reached

my current situation if I hadn't met him. If I were to pick the best thing I had done since coming to the continent, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that it was finding Kim Hyun-Sung.

When I looked at the lavish feast before me, I thought about how he was the apple of my eye, and I felt like I was getting rewarded for the relationship that I had built with him. Of course, I was worried about Rafael's reaction, but I couldn't stop smiling.

'You have no idea how much work I put into this relationship… '

In the past, I had done so many things to warm our lovely regressor's frozen heart, who got backstabbed so many times in his past life. I was finally getting rewarded for all the effort, time, and energy I had poured in order to make his doubts about me disappear and to make him confess his status as a regressor. If I had made one mistake in the middle of it, we wouldn't have had our current relationship.

"You'll eventually understand. I'm sure of it," I told him.

'He's pretty shy, but I'm sure you'll understand if you keep approaching him. Honestly, you won't be as close to him as I am—no, it's completely impossible, but you two should still get along. He'll change if you act a bit more aggressively and spend time with him. I'm telling you, the investment will be worth it.'

"I…" Rafael said.

"Yes?"

"I'm not really sure what kind of person… the guild master is. I'm not sure if he's really the person I'm thinking of," he continued.

'You must've suffered a lot.'

"People often misunderstand him as cold-hearted and ruthless because of his brutal training regimen. Of course, he treated me the same way back then. However, he's doing all of this for you. I'm sure Mr. Hyun-Sung wants you to become stronger more than anyone else," I told him.

The stronger you become, it'll help him let go of the grudge of his past life. It's natural to become nervous because I was the same at first. It was to the point that I was worried about him cutting my head off.

Rafael had to become even stronger so that the burdens on Kim Hyun-Sung's shoulders would get lighter. I didn't find Rafael's nervousness as strange. I was like him back then. I was worried that Kim Hyun-Sung might chop my head off.

"Maybe…" he paused.

"Yes?"

"Maybe Kim Hyun-Sung… isn't the type of person… you think he is…" he said cautiously.

"…"

"Actually, i-it's nothing. More importantly, are you feeling better?" he asked.

"Of course. I'm completely fine. I was just exhausted, and that's why I fainted," I replied.

"Miss Jo Hye-Jin already told me that it wasn't because of exhaustion," he confessed.

"*Haha*…"

"Are you really okay?" he asked again.

"It happens from time to time, so you don't have to worry too much. It's not like I got caught up in something dangerous, and it's not as serious as you think. I just get forgetful at times. That's all," I answered.

"I never imagined you were in a situation like that…" he commented.

'I don't want to talk about that right now… '

Kim Hyun-Sung was outside, but talking about it was still too risky. I felt that Rafael was about to talk about something weird, so I cast a soundproofing spell. However, a soundproofing spell would definitely attract anyone's suspicions.

"If the symptoms get worse, it's only natural to become worried. Fortunately, there's no reason for you to take it seriously. I actually feel really bad because I feel like I startled you a lot. I heard from Miss Park Lian that you were really surprised…" I said.

“No, that’s…”

“All my plans got canceled because of it, and I couldn’t keep my promise, so it’s been bothering me. I also made you worry for no reason,” I continued.

“You really don’t have to say it like that. I…”

“It’s really nothing. I’m healthy. I’d like to talk more about you than me. Have you overcome… your worries? Not that long ago, you seemed like you were having a difficult time concentrating, but you don’t seem that way today. I watched as I was passing by, but you were really impressive,” I commented.

I asked despite knowing the answer.

Rafael had nothing to fear now. He had decided to face his destiny after learning that Light Ki-Young was suffering from an illness. Of course, I was expecting a positive answer, but his words were just absurd.

“I’m not sure either. I’m just moving because I thought that I shouldn’t stand around like this, but…” Rafael paused.

“…”

“What do you think about… running away?” he asked.

“What?”

“I know it’s a bit out of the blue, but what about going to a place with no people and waiting until the danger passes? Basically, what do you think about living in a place where there are no people?” he clarified.

‘What the hell are you saying, man? Why would I abandon this and run away? You still haven’t come back to your senses?’

I had to stop him.

“That is unthinkable.”

Of course, once we started losing the battle and the entire continent was on the brink of annihilation, I would take everyone I cared about and run away, but resisting

until it was no longer possible to resist was the best course of action here.

I was worried that he had other plants, but it seemed that he was like Jo Hye-Jin. He was more worried about my amnesia. He was probably thinking that I had to stop working in the meantime, or my condition would worsen.

Rafael didn't look scared. Actually, he looked like he was struggling.

"I understand how you feel. It's natural to feel confused and scared because I was the same way. I was scared as well. I know what you're thinking and how worried you must be since you used to live an ordinary life. I even know that you're confused because of many different issues," I continued.

"…"

"However, you don't have to worry too much. The thing you're worried about won't ever happen, and the continent will overcome this crisis safely. I'm sure of it," I reassured him.

"Then what about you, hyung? What will happen to you?" he asked.

"I'm sure it'll be the same for me. I'll probably return to my normal life. I'm going to return to this place and spend time with the people I love," I answered.

"…"

"I'm sure you're nervous. It's natural to question your prowess and if you can even meet expectations, but you should believe in yourself a bit more," I told him.

"…"

"You're strong. That's what I think, and I'm sure the holy sword of gray light thinks the same. Otherwise, the holy sword wouldn't have chosen you," I said.

"The reason… the holy sword chose me…" he muttered.

"I'm sure there's a reason why Goddess Benigoa is watching over you. I'm sure of it," I added. I spoke in hopes that he would completely let go of all his worries and rise up.

He nodded at me and said, “Thank you, hyung.”

“It’s nothing,” I said.

“I was being too childish, right?” he asked.

“Not at all. It’s a thought we’ve all had at least once,” I answered.

“You don’t have to worry about anything else now,” he said.

‘Oh yeah? You already came to that conclusion?’

“No matter what, I’m…” he paused.

“…”

“I’m going to protect you no matter what, hyung,” he continued.

‘He really did come back to his senses.’

It was kind of strange that he wanted to protect me instead of the continent, but it wasn’t a problem because protecting me was basically protecting the continent. Rafael looked determined, and his eyes were filled with a strange ambition. I expected my words to be effective, but I didn’t expect it to be *this* effective.

I smiled warmly at him. “I trust you, Mr. Rafael.”

‘I’m done with him.’

The incident was completely over. I could finally focus on the angels. Of course, I wouldn’t completely ignore him, but there was no need for me to treat him as if he were some kind of treasure like what I had been doing for quite a while now.

I could just visit him once every few days and assist him so that he wouldn’t break down mentally. Of course, the most important thing here was to watch him grow as a player.

‘Tactical Rafael… ’

I just couldn’t let it go.

I was honestly skeptical about it, but if I could use him for even a few hours, the difference would be huge. Kim Hyun-Sung's burdens wouldn't be that heavy anymore, and I could even give him time to rest.

Anyway, Rafael was going to become stronger. His growth rate had been disappointing, but it would be an understatement to say that his growth rate over the past four days was abnormally fast. He had already surpassed the typical adventurer.

However, he truly lacked experience.

'Tactical Rafael can be employed without experience, but it'll be great if he has it.'

After coming to a conclusion, I nodded and suggested, "How about we go to a dungeon instead of staying here?"

"A dungeon?" Rafael asked.

"Yes, a dungeon. You're doing fine right now, but people have been saying that you lack experience… Of course, you're doing fine, so you don't have to worry too much, but I guarantee that going to a dungeon will definitely help you," I answered.

"Are you coming with me, hyung?" he asked.

"I'm not sure. I don't have time, but…" I paused.

'I think it should be fine if I visit a dungeon a few times… '

It would probably be more helpful if I went with him because if I were to give him advice from a tactical perspective, he would gain valuable experience. Moreover, he seemed excited about the idea.

"I'm not sure. I probably won't be able to go every time, but—"

"Then I'll go. I want to go. I want to try everything," he interrupted.

I had no choice but to nod.

"…"

“Let’s do it after you’ve become just a bit stronger than you are right now,” I said.

CHAPTER 630
THE TRUE DARKNESS OF THE CONTINENT (6)

Rafael definitely changed. I was worried that his determination wasn't going to last long, but seeing him train hard made it clear to me that I had made the right choice.

His growth rate was unrivaled.

'He's becoming stronger a lot faster than I expected.'

Of course, it was an undeniable fact that Rafael was at the height of his powers, but even with that in mind, his growth never plateaued since he started growing. Even Cha Hee-Ra clicked her tongue at the sight of it. Kim Hyun-Sung had high expectations, but he still seemed like he didn't like Rafael that much.

It was unfortunate, but there wasn't really anything I could do about it.

Rafael wasn't a pure swordsman, as he wasn't born with swordsmanship talent, unlike Kim Hyun-Sung. The third-rate swordsmen of the continent would probably jump into the Mirror Lake in humiliation if they could hear my thoughts, but it would be weird to say that Rafael was a swordsman.

The holy sword of gray light granted him an enormous amount of mana, so he became a hybrid swordsman capable of dishing out mid-range attacks. If I had to describe him, he was like a magic swordsman or a holy knight.

I wouldn't say that he was a bonafide magic swordsman, as his mana was bestowed upon him by the holy sword of gray light, but he was definitely a flexible swordsman.

After obtaining advanced magic operation knowledge, he quickly realized which areas of him needed improvement. He decided to maximize his advantages and invest a little more into advanced magic operation knowledge.

Balanced growth was important, but it seemed like he was going to handle his disadvantages by strengthening his attributes. As a result, his Endurance stat was embarrassingly low for a vanguard, but…

'He can increase it through the gray light. It can easily take care of his Endurance, and even though it won't be able to cover all fronts, it's not a bad decision because he needs power as soon as possible.'

Cha Hee-Ra and Park Yeon-Joo's comments weren't that bad.

"I think he'll be a challenging opponent."

Park Yeon-Joo was an assassin, and the banes of her existence were swordsmen and holy knights. Park Yeon-Joo's evaluation meant that Rafael was going to become even stronger. Otherwise, she wouldn't have said such words.

I smiled because Rafael Coin was slowly taking off to the moon. His growth speed was a lot faster than Jung Ha-Yan when she was in her prime. I wanted to focus on him less and focus on other tasks, but I couldn't because what kind of parent would be able to sit still when their child managed to get first place in the entire school and was being praised by everyone as a genius?

I didn't think that my behavior was that strange. In fact, I even heard of parents quitting their jobs to focus on their children.

"So… you want to focus on this for the time being? What about the angels?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"I won't completely abandon the angels. Han Sora and Ha-Yan… they're doing fine right now, and the remaining named angels are already in the middle of production. I don't know if we'll be able to make everything we need, but I'm sure we'll get close," I replied.

"It's a relief if that's the case, but seeing you speak so confidently makes me think that you're certain about it. So you don't need the fairy, right?" she asked.

"I don't think I'll need it right now," I answered.

"That's unfortunate," she commented.

"…"

"…"

“What do you mean?” I questioned.

“I was thinking about experiencing something a bit different. We’re both under a lot of stress these days, and since we’re so busy, I thought it wouldn’t be a bad idea to switch roles and vent our stress that way.

”Nontraditional ideas are the key to making a relationship work for the long term. *Ah*, I’m not saying that I’ve gotten tired of you, so don’t worry. I just wanted to try it out, that’s all…” she replied.

‘What’s up with that gaze, noona? It’s scary… ’

“Stop talking nonsense. Once we switch, it’ll last at least four days, and I don’t have time for that right now. There’s also a lot at stake…” I told her.

“Then, I’ll just keep it with me for now. I’m sure we’ll use it someday,” she said.

“…”

“*Ah!* How’s the tactical Rafael coming along? Didn’t you say you were going to try testing him?” she asked.

“Well…”

I tested him during training, but I wasn’t that satisfied with his performance. Rafael was thrilled, and he wasn’t that bad at all. Unfortunately, he was being compared to tactical Kim Hyun-Sung.

“How was it, hyung? I think it was perfect for me. What do you think?”

“Yeah, I think… it was okay, too.”

“You’re amazing. You’re… really amazing, hyung.”

“You too, Mr. Rafael…”

I told him that he was amazing, but I wasn’t satisfied at all.

The gap between him and Kim Hyun-Sung was too huge for me to write in detail. He had too many weaknesses, even if his stats weren’t taken into account. It seemed

that stats weren't enough to make up for an individual's lack of experience.

The engine wasn't bad, but there were many other issues. The handling was stiff, the fuel economy was garbage. The car was also extremely unstable while driving over speed bumps, and the gear change speed was quite slow.

However, I liked the kick that it gave when stepping on the accelerator.

'Of course, he's not that efficient since he's only using brute force.'

If Rafael were in Kim Hyun-Sung's position during the Republican War, he probably would have collapsed in exhaustion in just ten minutes.

His foundation was completely different from Kim Hyun-Sung's.

He had to earn more experience, and his weakness had to be supplemented by items.

Lee Ji-Hye noticed my serious face, and she said cautiously, "You don't look satisfied."

"It's kind of pointless to evaluate Rafael right now because he's too slow to accept instructions. Don't even get me started on the other issues. He's growing well, but I don't know if I can even use him the way I want. I did talk to Hyun-Sung about it, but he didn't seem to have a clear solution. There must be nothing he can do other than make Rafael train even harder," I explained.

"Is there really a need to feel so anxious? It's not good to have high expectations when he's just gaining momentum. Isn't that why you asked me to find a decent dungeon?" she asked.

"He still needs experience either way. Is it ready?" I asked.

"Of course. I looked into a few dungeons that were on the market, and I'm sure you'll be satisfied with them…" she answered.

"Good job, noona. You sent the list to Rafael as well, right?" I asked.

"I sent it to him a few days ago just like you asked… Are you going to have him take care of all of them?" she questioned.

"That's the only way he'll learn. I can't give him the same treatment as the other

ordinary rookies…" I told her.

"*Hm*…"

"I feel bad for the other rookies, but if they're training to become a non-commissioned officer, then Rafael is training in a military academy to become an officer. He's going to be in charge of the northwest region. Do you really think I'm keeping him around for no reason?

"He's going to be in charge of everything from dungeon selection to raids. Even if he fails, he needs to at least try it," I continued.

"Well, you're not wrong," she commented.

"He needs to figure out by himself how to create his own party. I don't think he's going to fail as long as he keeps in mind what he has learned until now," I said.

"That's true. I don't know much about this since I've never worked in this field before, but even in administrative work, experience is paramount. We can't keep babysitting, you know?

"However, an Epic dungeon is unusual for his first dungeon…" she said.

"I'm sure it'll be okay," I said.

I was sure he would clear the dungeon without any issues.

He was strong enough to clear an Epic dungeon, after all.

My Goddess' Hand Mirror suddenly started ringing.

I ignored the more than two hundred messages that came from Jung Ha-Yan and found Rafael's message.

[Hyung, I found people for the raid, and I'm done with preparations. I'll be back soon. I'll send you either the video of the dungeon clear or the record once I've returned. I organized everything in the attached file, so please take a look. I'll be on my way, then. Please take care of yourself. I'll be back as soon as possible.]

His message was short and sweet, and he moved quickly.

'I wonder if he'll be okay.'

I decided to send him to an Epic dungeon by himself and told him to figure out everything on his own because I thought that it was a good idea, but… I started getting worried about him when I recalled how no one would supervise him.

The people he picked weren't bad, and it wouldn't be that difficult for them to clear an Epic dungeon based on their stats. However, it was impossible to predict what would happen while one was in the midst of clearing a dungeon.

If he were unlucky enough, the entire party would get annihilated. My precious child, Rafael, might go missing in the dungeon by then.

Lee Ji-Hye said that it should be fine, but I became nervous because I invested so much in him. However, my nervousness disappeared exactly four days later. He proved to me that my worries were unnecessary by successfully clearing the dungeon.

"Not bad. He really must be the chosen warrior," Lee Ji-Hye commented.

"You're right."

The video he sent to me wasn't bad. The party did a great job despite the fact that it was their first time working together, and the process of taking care of the dungeon boss went perfectly. Of course, there were a few dangerous moments, but Rafael handled it smoothly, which proved to me that he had memorized the manual.

Time went on just like that. Over the past two months, Rafael's daily routine and my daily routine were simple. Rafael kept on clearing dungeons one after another as if he was trying to show off his growth.

He was also building relationships with people.

I thought it was time for him to meet a great partner, so Kim Hyun-Sung and I introduced him to a few war heroes during Kim Hyun-Sung's past life. We had been surreptitiously sponsoring them, and they finally became useful by becoming members of the chosen warrior's party.

Rafael had grown so much over the past two months that he could finally call himself an adventurer without getting embarrassed. I could concentrate on my work while

he was away clearing dungeons, which was a great thing.

All of a sudden, Rafael told me that he needed me in his party, so I accepted his request. Of course, Kim Hyun-Sung was against it, but I got his permission to enter a dungeon under the condition that Jo Hye-Jin and Park Lian would be next to me.

'I feel uneasy. I have a bad feeling. I'll go as well.'

We cleared the dungeon without any issues, which betrayed Kim Hyun-Sung's worries.

Rafael looked hesitant, and he hadn't been saying anything throughout the dungeon conquests, but it was clear that something was making him feel uncomfortable. I kept a closer look at Rafael after thinking that perhaps Kim Hyun-Sung noticed something.

However, I didn't notice anything suspicious.

Rafael still looked at me affectionately, and he listened to me well, which made him give off the air of an honor student.

There was no point in being suspicious of him when he used to call me hyung while crying. I tested him by grabbing my head in pain, and he started crying. He even prayed to Benigoa while holding my hand.

It seemed that we had finally gotten rid of the demon contractors for good, so I was convinced that another accident of that kind would never occur again.

"How are the preparations going?" I asked.

"It's done, hyung. The party is formed as well. Will Miss Jo Hye-Jin and Miss Park Lian accompany us today as well?" Rafael asked.

"Probably, but you don't have to worry too much. They'll most likely watch just like last time and won't participate in the raid itself. I know it's probably bothersome to have them tag along, but…" I paused.

"The guild master won't allow you to come with me otherwise," he said.

"*Haha*…" I laughed.

“Still, going to dungeons with you is more helpful to me, so I can live with that. Shall we get going?” he asked.

“Okay.”

‘This kid is pretty energetic today.’

However, he also looked really nervous. I could understand why he was nervous—his recent dungeon raid evaluations weren’t that great, after all.

CHAPTER 631
QUEEN'S TOMB (1)

'It definitely seemed a bit off.'

Rafael's recent dungeon runs were successful, but the journey was a mess. I saw quite a few issues in the dungeon raid videos he had been sending to me. Out of five stars, he was still getting 3.8 stars.

I cheered him on because it felt like my son had just shown me his report card, which said that he was in first place out of every student in the entire school.

However, he had been making mistakes in his recent dungeon runs. I believed that he would eventually learn from his mistake and not repeat it, but the mistake eventually became a huge issue that could have become a catastrophe.

His recent performance nosedived as well, and I was getting worried that he wouldn't be able to maintain his first place out of every student in the school because the issue was affecting him mentally.

The dungeon's difficulty was pretty high.

The dungeon's name was Black Heart's Shipwreck, and it was a Legendary dungeon, so it would be strange if it were easy to clear.

The main stage was a large ship, and they had a pretty difficult time fighting unfamiliar monsters such as mermaids and sea creatures. Some parts of the dungeon were even submerged in water, and there were areas with low oxygen levels. The floor was also uneven, which made it difficult for them to move around properly.

The party charged recklessly, and they cleared it somehow, but the majority of the party members gave up the moment they were faced with the boss monster, the Pirate Captain, so it could be said that they actually failed the dungeon conquest.

The only reason they managed to clear the dungeon in the end wasn't because of their great teamwork or anything; it was all because of their outstanding overall

stats.

'It was a mess.'

The party members' attributes were outstanding, and their personalities were contrasting, which made it difficult for them to work together. However, the biggest issue was the fact that Rafael wasn't the center of the party.

'He also lacks the ability to respond to an unexpected turn of events.'

There were many things he had to work on.

"Ah, you're here."

"I look forward to working with you."

"I'm looking forward to it as well."

"I look forward to your cooperation, Chairman Lee Ki-Young."

"It feels like it's been a while since I last saw you."

I turned and saw Rafael's party members. It wasn't my first time seeing them. Last time, the same party went on an easy dungeon run, and they were the ones we were surreptitiously sponsoring. I selected the useful ones among the heroes of Kim Hyun-Sung's past life throughout the continent, and I introduced them to Rafael.

I intentionally introduced some of them to Rafael while I allowed nature to run its course for some of them. There was even this priest whom Rafael met coincidentally while clearing an Epic dungeon. It was the most natural encounter I had ever seen.

I turned and saw a woman looking at Rafael.

She was Marian, the widely acclaimed Miracle Priest right after the end of the First Continental War.

She was an adventurer from Europe, and she was one of those people who had been living a life far from danger.

After settling down in a small village that was located off the beaten path, she lived a

decent life while taking care of her children. However, she lost everything she loved after the enemies raided their village.

Afterward, she volunteered as a combat priest and marched across the battlefield. Of course, all this happened in her previous life. *Ah*, for the record, she died a miserable death at the hands of the masked scum.

Marian's second life was different. She didn't lose the small village where she settled down, but coincidentally. Yes, it was a coincidence. Undead creatures attacked her village, and she awakened earlier than her during her past life.

The village was almost annihilated, but she awakened and saved it.

Afterward, she thought about how she could use her powers for the greater good, and that was when she encountered Rafael. She was the perfect traveling companion for a warrior whose life as an adventurer was just getting started.

'This guy wasn't bad either.'

I liked the second guy as well. He was the hunting dog, Lee Joo-Hyuk. He was Korean, and if I had to describe his job in the party, it would be similar to Lee Chang-Ryeol's job.

However, he was so tenacious that even Kim Hyun-Sung acknowledged his tenacity in his past life. He became famous for biting off an angel's wings during the war with the angels. He was subsequently recognized for his contributions on the battlefield and was promoted to the position of chief executive of the alliance force.

Of course, all that happened during his past life.

In his second life, he started as Rafael's comrade instead of a mercenary.

He was supposed to gain experience by enduring hardships as a mercenary, so I was worried that he wouldn't develop in a similar way as he did during his past life. However, he turned out to be the one with the most potential among the party members.

Rafael even considered him as his rival, which was great. For the record, the masked scum also killed him. True to his nickname, it was said that he met a miserable fate, and his remains were consumed by starving beasts.

Of course, those two weren't the only ones decent in this party. There was also a promising, talented mage who had played a vital role in the war, but he succumbed to Jin Cheong's temptation and died after being branded as a traitor.

There was also an archer, who was one of the most famous adventurers throughout the continent back then, but he was unfortunately killed by the masked scum when the latter decided to bury those whom he captured in a mass burial.

The assassin standing next to him perished on the same day with the other captives. A knight of the Republic was also in the party. The knight lost against the masked scum during his past life and was forced to roam the battlefield as the masked scum's puppet.

'His story is really heartbreaking.'

If my memories were serving me correctly, Kim Hyun-Sung told me that the masked scum forced the knight to kill his comrades with his own hands. Kim Hyun-Sung's past life was basically an apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic story, so everyone met horrible fates. Still, it couldn't be denied that they were once famous adventurers.

If the masked scum Jin Cheong were still alive, we wouldn't have been able to form this formidable party. Most of them would have perished under the masked scum's schemes, or they would have scattered across the continent at the moment.

'That bastard was definitely strong.'

Just recalling Kim Hyun-Sung's words made my hands quiver. Even Jo Hye-Jin almost died at the hands of the masked scum. It all happened in our past lives, and it couldn't possibly happen today, but I still couldn't get over it.

Anyway, Rafael looked happy with his party members. It hadn't been that long since they met, but it seemed that their dungeon runs were enough for them to become friends. Rafael was a sociable person, so he easily managed to fit right in with the others and even become their guardian.

At the sight, I decided to wait and see for the meantime.

'It's also embarrassing for me to go up there and act like I can protect them.'

I couldn't possibly protect Rafael, but it would be a different story if I were in Doom

Ki-Young mode. Unfortunately, I was the one who had to be protected in my current form. My job here was more like an analyst or a supervisor.

It was my job to help them get a sense of what it would feel like to have an on-field supervisor.

'I'm helping them earn more experience.'

It was the fastest way to help them learn how the Blue Guild functioned as a party.

'I have it all in my head.'

I had to transfer at least a portion of what I had into these party members and into Rafael's mind. Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't giving orders because he couldn't do it. In fact, he was the leader of the Blue Guild's party when it had just been created.

He simply handed the authority to lead over to me because he trusted me and acknowledged my outstanding abilities.

He wasn't acting like a leader anymore, but he understood tactics better than anyone else.

It was the same for Cha Hee-Ra. She was the leader of the Red Mercenary Guild herself, and Kasugano Yuno also led her own troops.

It was important for Rafael to earn more experience so that he would be able to make his own judgment based on the amount of knowledge he possessed. Any veteran adventurer out there would agree with me.

In other words, Rafael's party needed both time and experience.

'Hyung is pretty experienced in this field.'

I was prepared to let them experience a new world.

It had been a while since I stood at the front lines, but Mind's Eye was still working fine.

I nodded as a signal for them to start.

"…"

"Today, we're going to raid the Legendary dungeon, Queen's Tomb."

'Keep going.'

"Like all Legendary dungeons, the details of the dungeon are hidden, but I assume the conquest starts once we actually get inside the Queen's Tomb. There might be a small-scale and even a large-scale battle underground.

"As for the formation… I think it's best if I explain the details one more time after we enter the dungeon and experience the first skirmish. All right, let's head in," Rafael explained.

"You're a little more serious today," a party member commented.

"It's pretty obvious why," said another party member.

"Please refrain from unnecessary chit-chat," Rafael warned.

"Yes, sir, Mr. Leader," a member replied.

'They're getting along pretty well.'

It sounded like they were joking around to break the tension, not to make fun of Rafael.

'Rafael is the leader of the party, but… '

He had the least amount of experience among everyone here.

Still, Jo Hye-Jin seemed to have the same opinion as me. She also thought that they were a decent party. It was a well-balanced party. The rearguard was a bit weak, but Rafael could easily assist them. He definitely…

'He definitely made a great party.'

He had created a party that would allow him to maximize his strength. If it weren't for him, this party wouldn't be able to run smoothly.

He was playing the role of a bridgehead between the vanguard and the rearguard while making up for the rearguard's lack of firepower.

This party was different from the Blue Guild's party. In terms of completeness, they couldn't be compared to the Blue Guild's party, but they seemed like a fun party to hang out with. After looking at the party members' detailed stats, abilities, individual characters, and items using Mind's Eye, I nodded to myself once again.

I turned to Jo Hye-Jin with a look of agony. Perhaps it was because I had been carrying such a piece of heavy luggage for quite a while now, but my legs were aching. I felt kind of bad, but when I started panting to catch my breath, Jo Hye-Jin frowned at me.

She looked like she was saying, "This bastard is at it again."

However, she still decided to approach me and say, "Give that luggage to me."

"No, it's fine, Miss Hye-Jin. I can carry it," I told her.

"Stop talking nonsense and give it to me. I can at least carry this for you. We're not even participating in the raid, so I don't have a problem holding one bag for you," she said.

"I said that I'm fine," I said, denying her offer.

"You looked at me just now because you want me to carry it for you, right?" she asked.

"Not exactly…" I mumbled.

"Hurry up and give it to me," she urged.

"Well, since you said so…" I said.

My shoulders felt a bit lighter.

Just in time, I heard a voice announcing that we had reached the dungeon.

"Let's jump right in," Rafael said.

~

[You have entered the Legendary-rank dungeon, Queen's Tomb. [10/11] The number of participants has been confirmed.]

~

It had been a while since I felt this way.

CHAPTER 632
QUEEN'S TOMB (2)

'Our surroundings have changed. We must be inside the dungeon.'

I looked around and realized that we were finally inside the tomb. We didn't see any monsters, so the dungeon didn't seem to be the type of dungeon where adventurers would immediately encounter monsters upon entering.

The dungeon's name was the Queen's Tomb, so we would most likely encounter guards or monsters protecting the tomb the deeper we got into this dumb. It was too early to tell, but I was the Rank 4 Manager of the Rift Museum, so it wasn't that difficult for me to deduce just what kind of dungeon we were in.

'It's not bad.'

Unlike the previous dungeon that the chosen warrior's party somehow managed to clear last time, this dungeon seemed like a dungeon that one would often see throughout the continent. I was happy at the possibility that it was the case.

It was more exhausting to deduce a dungeon's trick and deal with it rather than just fighting the monsters inside of it. It would be easier to understand if I were to compare this one to the Cursed Shrine, which was an Epic-rank dungeon.

The monsters were weak, but its trick made it difficult enough for it to be considered a Legendary-rank dungeon. I was sure that Rafael's party would have a hard time if they decided to enter the Cursed Shrine.

I didn't have that difficult of a time back then because of Jung Ha-Yan, but…

'It still would've been difficult.'

A less experienced party would find it more difficult to deal with a dungeon's trick.

Anyway, I digressed, so dungeons like this one would usually have monsters with levels a bit higher than average. The Queen's Tomb looked like the most common

dungeon out there, but it was still a Legendary-rank dungeon.

I was curious about how the party was going to proceed. After entering the dungeon, a duo consisting of a rogue and an archer moved ahead. If this were the Blue Guild's party, Kim Ye-Ri and Lee Chang-Ryeol would have been the ones in their position.

"I don't see anything out of the ordinary, Mr. Rafael. I don't see any monsters or other traps nearby. Should we look around a bit more?" one of the duo reported.

"No, I think it's best if we all move together. It's not good to be too far from the main party. There aren't any monsters or traps, so we're probably in a safe zone," Rafael replied.

It was a bit burdensome how Rafael kept glancing at me.

Whenever I nodded, he would continue talking.

'He's doing it again.'

It felt like he was asking me if what he was doing was okay. I had already told him that he needed to have more confidence in his own decisions, but it seemed that old habits die hard.

I looked at Jo Hye-Jin. She was behind me because she thought that she would become a distraction if she were nearby.

"…"

"What's wrong?" asked Jo Hye-Jin.

"No, it's nothing," I replied.

"Are you already tired from walking? Want me to carry you?" she asked.

"No, I'm not *that* tired. I'm okay so far, but give me a hand when I'm exhausted. *Ah*, you can carry me later," I answered.

"…"

"I'm telling you this for a reason. The dungeon looks pretty big…"

“Is that so?” she questioned.

“Can’t you tell just by looking at it? The ceiling is high, the path is wide, and the interior is so big that it can probably contain an entire city. It feels more like we’re in a city where the queen once lived rather than her tomb. However, it’s smaller than the Rift Museum. We didn’t really have to walk around a lot when we were inside the museum, but it’s definitely still smaller than the Rift Museum.

“Anyway, hasn’t it been a while since you entered a dungeon?” I asked.

“It’s my first time after the Mirror Lake incident, but you can’t really call that place a dungeon. More importantly, is it really okay for you to talk to me?” she questioned.

“…”

“…”

“It’s better to leave the overall procedure to Rafael anyway. I don’t have much to do other than walk. If I stay near them, I’ll just make them anxious. I’m not here to evaluate them, but they’ll probably feel that way if I were to stay so close to them.

“I think this is the perfect distance. I already heard what I needed to hear, so I think it’s best to give them pointers after the first battle. What do you think about them?” I asked.

“The party isn’t bad. They’re united, and their teamwork is great even though it hasn’t been that long since they got together. Parties like them are bound to climb the ranks,” she answered.

“You’re pretty generous,” I commented.

“I’m just telling you what I’m seeing here. They’re too strong to be called rookies. Especially Rafael…” she paused.

“Oh?”

“If he grows just a bit stronger, he’ll become just as strong as the Eight Seats of the continent. Of course, I’m talking about when the Eight Seats was first introduced. I can’t say that his skills are polished, but…” she continued.

"*Hm*…"

"He'll probably get stronger after this expedition," she added.

"Yeah, probably," I said.

"Don't push yourself too hard, Sub Guild Master," she warned.

"There's no reason for me to push myself hard. It's not like I'm doing strenuous activities. Stop worrying about useless things and take a look at that. Isn't it grand and beautiful? The architecture is amazing," I told her.

"We're inside a dungeon," Jo Hye-Jin reminded me.

"It's okay to appreciate things. Why are you so uptight?" I commented.

"We're working right now, and it's best to avoid small talk altogether. I'm just playing along because you seem bored," she said.

"It's okay to relax a bit. It's exhausting being serious all the time. I don't have any right to say this, but at times like this, it's okay to relax a little. Hyun-Sung isn't here, and no one will complain if we take it easy. You're not even going to participate," I explained.

"At least one of us should stay alert," she said.

"Yeah, yeah."

I couldn't help but think that I should start focusing as our surroundings changed the deeper we walked into the tomb.

'That's a nice view.'

The road got even wider, and the ceiling got even higher. At first, I thought it was the queen's city, but now, it looked like a city for giants. My jaw slowly dropped because it was a sight to behold.

I thought I had already seen every possible scenery out there since I arrived on the continent, but it was my first time seeing something like this.

If I were to nitpick about one thing, it would be the fact that I was starting to get exhausted from all the walking. I couldn't help but wish that Park Deok-Gu were here.

I would have asked him to carry me on his back so I could enjoy the scenery here properly. I started complaining to myself because we had been walking for four hours without encountering any monsters, and I was getting a bit exhausted.

'Shit, I'm so unprepared.'

I couldn't help but think that I should have prepared a carriage or something.

Rafael was definitely worried about me because he suggested that we take a break, but if we took a break without encountering monsters, we would just end up spending more time here.

Eventually, we stumbled upon a large door. I had an idea of what was about to happen based on the two giant statues standing next to the door.

- You are in…

- The Queen's Tomb…

- Those without permission…

- Entry not allowed…

The giant statues' eyes shone sinisterly, and their gaze landed on Rafael's party.

'Who the hell designed this dungeon? It's really cheesy.'

It was less likely because this was a Legendary-rank dungeon, but I would be pretty disappointed if this dungeon was made after Benigoa Patch 2.0.

- Go back.

- You unholy beings.

- Those who are not qualified to enter.

- Cannot enter this place.

“Prepare for battle!” Rafael announced.

“Okay.”

“Mez will handle one, and we’ll quickly take care of the other one in the meantime,” he instructed.

“Got it.”

“Yes, sir.”

- Death.

“Begin.”

- Death!

The battle started in the blink of an eye.

The mage stretched his hand out, and an ice pillar abruptly appeared and the path of one of the guardians. Ice pillars quickly isolated the guardian from the other guardian, and the mage seemed dissatisfied, as he turned the guardian into an ice statue as well.

It wasn’t a bad start overall. It was one of the most common openings that parties used during dungeon conquests.

The guardians before us were more like boss monsters rather than normal monsters because there was no way the monsters guarding the door to the queen’s tomb would be ordinary monsters. In that sense…

‘It’s not bad… ’

However, I actually felt frustrated.

‘Is there… really a need to go that far?’

Rafael’s party was strong, and even among the parties that travel all over the

continent, they were pretty high up in the ranks. The issue was that they didn't have to go that far against these monsters.

While the party was busy dealing with one of the two guardians, the other guardian broke out of the ice prison and joined the fray. The party attracted the attention of the other guardian while the mage cast another spell to immobilize the guardian.

Afterward, they focused their firepower on the remaining guardian.

'This is inefficient.'

Mages didn't have unlimited mana, and the mana that the mage had just used to cast a spell that had immobilized one of the guardians couldn't be taken back.

It would have been more efficient if the mage joined the fray rather than casting a powerful spell on the other guardian. They were completely capable of kiting the other guardian while focusing their attacks on the other.

In other words, they wouldn't have any issue taking both guardians at the same time.

'You guys were part of the hero party in your past lives, damn it. On top of that, the chosen warrior is also in your party, and he's wielding the holy sword. Do you guys really have to go this far?'

"Please cast the same spell once it goes off cooldown," Rafael ordered.

"Okay."

"Its Endurance is higher than expected. Please be careful, Mr. Lee Joo-Hyuk," he warned.

"Don't worry."

"Please maintain the buffs, and I want the two of you to create as much distraction as possible…" he continued.

I didn't want to step up here, but I felt frustrated with the way they were tackling this dungeon, considering their stats and skills. In the end, I failed to stand by and watch.

"Cancel the spell," I ordered.

I mumbled it, but the mage definitely heard me because he turned toward me in surprise. It wasn't a big deal, but it felt like they had acknowledged Rafael as the party leader.

'They're pretty loyal.'

"I'll be giving the orders from now on," I told them.

"Hyung is the party leader from now on. Please focus," Rafael announced.

"Don't be so cautious. Don't hold back. The vanguard should expect to get hit once or twice because that's the reason you've been investing points into your Endurance.

"Priest, cast a protection spell; Mage, channel a powerful AoE spell. Archer and Rogue, bring both guardians closer to each other. Mage, do your best to hit both guardians at the same time, but make sure to attack them from behind," I instructed.

Booooooooom!!!

"Priests, cast a protection spell if you think the guardians' attacks will reach the vanguards. Mage, cast the same spell again," I ordered.

Booooooooooooom!!!

"Vanguards, keep an eye out on the guardians' attack and aggro range. Kite the guardians and make sure that they'll stay together without losing any of their aggro. Mage, I want you to cast the same spell again," I said.

Booooooooooooom!!!

A rumbling noise echoed as parts of the guardians' bodies collapsed and turned into dust. The party members were surprised. It seemed that they truly had no idea that they could have easily ended this fight while fighting both guardians at the same time.

They seemed really surprised because it took them quite a while to come back to their senses. It was a bit funny to see all of them staring at me.

"Are you not going to finish them?" I asked, "Vanguards, go in and go all out."

With that, the party members rushed toward the guardians.

CHAPTER 633
QUEEN'S TOMB (3)

"What do you think?" I asked.

"I'm not sure what to say except that I didn't think it'd be this easy," said the knight that the masked scum had turned into a member of the undead in his previous life. Honestly, I couldn't really say that all this was because of me, but I couldn't help but feel superior.

'Why are they trying to test the waters?'

The chosen warrior party was strong. If they were an ordinary party, what happened just now couldn't have happened so smoothly. The mage had debuffs capable of shredding the guardians' Endurance and Magic Defense, while the priest had buffs that dramatically increased the mages' firepower.

The vanguards all had advanced magic operation knowledge, and their instincts were keen enough for them to take advantage of the openings that the mage was making to their advantage.

This kind of party should be able to make quick work of any mid-boss out there.

"A-As expected… you're amazing, hyung. If you weren't here, we could've been in danger… earlier and just now," Rafael complimented.

"It wasn't that amazing," I said.

"You are. Just like Mr. Rafel said, you looked really amazing. It's pretty difficult to make reasonable decisions during combat. I really thought we were in danger just now, especially when the queen's knights appeared…" said the female knight.

Her words made the hunting dog, Lee Joo-Hyuk, nod.

'Yeah, the monsters just now were more difficult than the guardians earlier.'

The two guardians earlier perished after just a few orders from me, but the fight just now was a bit more complicated. The queen's troops and eight of her knights had swarmed us just as we had entered the door.

The battle that took place earlier was dangerous, even for this kind of party.

'Their formation was pretty impressive as well.'

They didn't mindlessly charge at us while wielding swords and shields. They were a real army with mages and archers in their team. It was so dangerous that even Jo Hye-Jin asked me if she should join the battle. I was kind of surprised, but I thought this was a good chance for the chosen warrior party to gain more experience.

The battle was large enough that it resembled a war, and it was a rare battle because the continent was currently peaceful.

The party members of the chosen warrior party were training every day, but there was no way training could replace an actual battle. In that sense, the battle just now was quite a thrilling experience.

It was ridiculous how they had looked at me, expecting me to give them orders. I had remained quiet, seemingly telling them to figure it out themselves. Rafael had seen that, and he had hurriedly prepared the party, which had been pretty fun to watch.

They managed to take care of the eight knights under Rafael's lead, but it was really shocking how they were struggling against the eight knights before anyone took leadership.

I could tell how determined the party members were when they fought for hours without rest, and the fact that they were growing so fast proved that they were truly heroes during their past lives.

'This Coin is going to the moon! You guys can save the world, damn it!'

I was pleased to see them absorb information like sponges.

Aside from the eight knights, they didn't need orders to deal with the remaining rabble.

The battle didn't last that long, but it still allowed them to understand just what kind

of jobs they were supposed to do during battle.

“My jaw dropped when you gave special orders to Mr. Rafael. Those orders sounded strange to me, but they changed everything. I could see that you’ve been really paying attention to him, even in a dungeon like this…” the knight commented.

“*Haha*, it’s nothing. Anyone can do it once they have enough experience under their belts. Really, you praise me too much, *haha.*” I laughed.

‘Well, I have Mind’s Eye… ’

“No, I’m sure no one can do what you just did. No one…” Rafael muttered.

“Pardon me for asking this, but… do you think it’s possible for me to do what you did?” Lee Joo-Hyuk suddenly asked.

He considered Rafael as his rival, and his question made everyone stare at me. The female knight looked at me with eyes full of hope. If Lee Joo-Hyuk could do it, she could probably do it as well. Rafael also stared at me with the same gaze as them.

‘Everyone is… ’

“Well…” I trailed off.

“…”

“…”

“I’m sure you can do it, too, but it won’t be as efficient,” I answered.

They were pretty skilled, but…

“I’m sorry to tell you this, but since your goal is to use your own individual power as efficiently as possible… *Ah*, of course, I’m not belittling you, Mr. Joo-Hyuk. I’m sure you’re aware, but you have a different role in the party,” I continued.

I decided to take a mental note of the hunting dog. If ever I needed him to do something for me, it would be keeping a powerful enemy at bay. He was really tenacious and vicious, which complimented his fighting style.

While I was thinking about how to tell him my thoughts, Marian, our Miracle Priest, asked, “What about Miss Jo Hye-Jin?”

“Well, I would say it’s half and half…” I replied.

Jo Hye-Jin would be useful, but there was no way she could actually do it at the same efficiency as me. It would be even more difficult for her to do such a thing in a battle like that battle earlier.

I wasn’t sure when the tactical Kim Hyun-Sung became so popular, but it felt like people from all over were asking those who were powerful if they had enough potential to become as powerful as Kim Hyun-Sung.

“But he was really amazing. I knew from the moment I met our party leader that he was strong, but… I feel like he got three times—no, a lot stronger than that under your orders,” a party member chimed in.

‘I don’t think it’s that much. Honestly… it wasn’t that great, but I can’t say that.’

“Objectively speaking, how much stronger do you think we can get?” asked a party member.

“You’re not getting stronger. The reason you managed to fight like you did earlier was that you were originally that strong. There’s just a limit to how much of your true prowess you can actually use. I was just helping you unlock your true prowess,” I explained.

“But you also noticed what was going on around us rather than just what’s going on from afar… you caught every detail possible.”

‘Yes, that’s right.’

“I’m just a bit observant,” I said.

“I’m sure it’s not something one can achieve just by simply being a bit more observant than others. It all has to do with talent and… an overwhelming talent at that,” Lee Joo-Hyuk commented.

‘Thanks, Joo-Hyuk. I never thought I’d hear someone say that about me. I’ll make time and help you out later.’

"A genius… You're really a genius… Father Lee Ki-Young. Your genius is impossible to comprehend…"

'Our tragic female knight. What was her name again… I'll help you as well.'

I waved my hand, seemingly in dismissal. However, I was happy to hear their compliments. Jo Hye-Jin clicked her tongue, but she didn't say anything. She had to have thought that it wasn't a bad idea to hear such compliments, as I needed to be happy for the sake of my mental health.

"*Hahaha*, I'm not that talented to be called a genius. Mr. Rafael is the genius here," I said.

"Well, when you compare Rafael to the Guild Master of the Blue Guild…" Marian paused.

'Who's the bigger genius, you ask?'

She was rather cautious when she asked that question, but it was a light-hearted topic that people could talk about during their break.

Popular adventurers on the continent were often treated like celebrities or politicians. People were always gossiping about us, so I wasn't really offended.

People often talked about things even I found amusing over drinks.

The topics would be about who would win if Berserk Cha Hee-Ra and Kim Hyun-Sung fought or if Lauren and Elune fought each other. Assuming that there weren't any obstacles, would a unicorn be faster than a griffon?

Who would win if Jin Cheong and Ito Sota fought each other? Who was the stronger one between the demon worshiper and the demon summoner?

It seemed that there were many more jobless and idle people than I thought throughout the continent as I kept on seeing useless questions like, who would win if Jesus and Buddha fought, or who do you like more between your Mom and Dad?

Benigoa Net was filled with such topics, but I was personally more interested in the fight between Demon Summoner Jin Cheong and Demon Worshiper Ito Sota. The people had spoken, and Jin Cheong won by a landslide.

Anyway, those questions were pretty funny and dumb.

I got sidetracked for a moment, but…

'Hm…"

I had to take Marian's question seriously. Well, it was useless to take the question so seriously, but I had to do so.

'Rafael?'

Rafael was talented, but picking the bigger genius between him and Kim Hyun-Sung?

Comparing him to Kim Hyun-Sung was…

'Pretty useless… '

I pondered over how I would answer the question without hurting Rafael's feelings, but for now, I decided to just laugh awkwardly.

Marian had to have noticed that I was between a rock and a hard place because her cheeks flushed red in embarrassment.

'It's understandable that you'd ask that question, but the reason why you're asking such a stupid question is because you haven't seen Hyun-Sung yet. Your jaw will drop when you see him at his peak. He literally flies everywhere. Shit, Rafael can't compare to him. No one can replace Hyun-Sung. Not only is he a genius that puts in a lot of effort, but he's also a regressor. How can you compare Rafael to someone like that? You just can't—no, it's actually an insult.'

"*Hahaha*, that's… kind of a difficult question for me to answer," I said.

"As expected… it was a difficult question. Then, what about when Rafael fights under your command? Won't he be comparable to the guild master—" Marian asked.

"No, he can't win," I interrupted.

I wasn't sure why she was asking, but her question wasn't that difficult to answer.

"What?"

“Rafael will definitely lose. At most, he has only a one percent chance of winning. I believe no one here has seen our guild master’s true power. Once you see him fighting with all his might, you’ll immediately understand what I mean. Rafael can’t beat him no matter what…” I explained.

“…”

“It’s not just Rafael. Even if all of you were to fight him under my command, you’d probably only have a five percent chance of winning. Of course, the odds will be a bit different if you become at least three times stronger than you are right now, but the outcome is still the same,” I continued.

The quiet knight spoke up. “But still… is he really that strong?”

“Yes, he’s *that* strong. I know that all of you have become stronger in just a short period of time. You have both the confidence and the talent… and I have no issues considering you as a high-ranking party on the continent.

”Mr. Rafael and all of you are all strong. It’s also undeniable that all of you are growing faster than the Blue Guild’s party a long time ago. This party’s progress has been extremely fast,” I answered.

“…”

“I’m not talking about your lack of experience. It’s an issue with your stats,” I said.

“…”

“The victor will probably be determined within ten seconds. After the first move, all of you will be incapacitated. I won’t even bother going into the details about the fight. If I were to be a bit blunt… it’ll be suicide for you guys to fight Kim Hyun-Sung,” I told them.

“…”

I didn’t exaggerate anything, but it seemed that times had truly changed.

‘It’s clear that these guys really have no idea just how strong our Hyun-Sung is… ’

Marian wouldn’t have asked such a stupid question if she had seen Kim Hyun-Sung’s

true power at least once.

CHAPTER 634
ARE YOU GUYS A RAID PARTY AGAINST KIM HYUN-SUNG? (1)

I wasn't exaggerating at all. There was no way this party could take on Kim Hyun-Sung unless they managed to get into a contract with a high-ranking demon.

'No, even a contract wouldn't be enough.'

They had to summon the demon they had gotten into a contract with for them to become strong enough to take on Kim Hyun-Sung. However, I wasn't underestimating the chosen warrior party.

Kim Hyun-Sung was just that strong.

He even cut down Donovan, the weakest of the Four Heavenly Kings.

A year ago, he decided to immerse himself in training, and he didn't contact me directly even once, so I couldn't really imagine just how strong he had become since then. I hadn't really seen Kim Hyun-Sung's true might since that fateful day, so I was only making deductions based on his stats.

Of course, one's status window wasn't really that great of a measuring stick because one's prowess would vary depending on many different factors.

Kim Hyun-Sung was probably a lot stronger than what I was thinking. He was currently in the middle of preparing for his destined battle with the Outer God and its pigeons, so I was sure he was capable of unleashing power close to Mythic.

However, the biggest issue here would actually be Kim Hyun-Sung's speed. There was no way the party members of the chosen warrior's party could track Kim Hyun-Sung's movement with their eyes.

I was sure that the rearguards wouldn't be able to see even his shadow.

Mariam would probably die without knowing how she died, and she would only realize that she was dead the moment her retina captured her headless figure and her head rolling on the ground.

The same outcome would befall the archer and the rogue, whose biggest stat investment was in Agility. In fact, I didn't even think that there would be a battle in the first place, as the knight lacked too many Agility points to protect the party members.

I thought Rafael and the hunting dog were the only ones capable of somehow keeping up with Kim Hyun-Sung. They could probably follow Kim Hyun-Sung's movements and clash swords with him, but it didn't mean that they could win.

I wanted to tell them that there was hope and give them courage, but it was better to be blunt when it came to something like that. It seemed that the party was pretty shocked by my words.

'They look like they're in a bad mood.'

They were happy, but their mood died when reality struck them.

'It can't be helped. That's reality… '

The expedition continued, but it felt like everyone was sad, which made me feel quite a bit worried. Fortunately, their effectiveness and their prowess didn't really get affected by the mood in a negative way.

They worked even harder as if they were showing me that they were determined to fight Kim Hyun-Sung. It was quite rare for me to feel moved, but seeing their determination and efforts reminded me of the time when Park Deok-Gu worked especially hard.

'That's it. Work hard. I worked hard in raising you guys, so I don't want you to feel depressed over the harsh reality. You guys still have the potential to become even stronger. If you work hard for the next ten years, you can probably take him on by then, so hang in there.'

It could be said that this was my opportunity to take care of them officially. I had already corrected their formation, so I decided to support them by telling them which stats they should invest their available stat points in for the sake of min-

maxing.

I also told them which skills were better during certain scenarios and which items would greatly improve their prowess.

Whenever we took breaks, the party members would either exchange items with each other or train. This was made possible because this dungeon was pretty big. We explored a lot and rested whenever possible after battles.

However, we were actually starting to get worried about running out of food.

Fortunately, it seemed that we were about to reach the boss room.

The archer also reported that we were near the boss room, so the party members got ready for the final battle.

“Hyung,” Rafael said.

“Yes?”

“…”

“…”

“It’s nothing,” he said.

Rafael sounded hesitant, as if there was something he wanted to tell me. He had been trying to make time for the two of us, seemingly to say something to me, but in the end, he remained quiet.

We soon encountered the dungeon boss, and its name perfectly described its appearance.

As expected, it was the queen of this place.

- How dare you invade my territory!

I felt a shiver down my spine when the queen threatened the expedition team with a cliche line, but thanks to the experience they had gained through the expedition, the party members fought pretty well without my orders.

I would only shake my head if someone were to ask me about which of them was the best party member. However, I couldn't really blame them because they were doing their best. They worked well together, and they were growing slowly but surely.

This expedition was probably their best dungeon run so far.

Booooooooom!

"P-Protect the rearguard no matter what. We must protect them!" Rafael ordered.

"…"

"You don't need to worry about the vanguard. Stay next to Miss Marian no matter what," he said.

"…"

"Don't be shocked if you miss. We can stop her by grouping up. Let's group up, and I want the mage to prepare a protection spell… As soon as we miss the boss, cast the protection spell. Otherwise, the boss will attack us using the gap," he commanded.

- Humans are not allowed here. You'll pay the price for waking me from my slumber.

The sword-wielding queen moved, and the mage cast a protection spell.

Craaaaaack!

There was a loud noise, but it wasn't that impactful.

Lee Joo-Hyuk, the hunting dog, chased after the queen to fight her. The archer and the rogue supported Lee Joo-Hyuk, while the knight stayed close to the priest and the mage. Rafael stood at the helm of the party and led them against the queen.

I thought they were a bit too slow, but it was undeniable that their formation was the best against the queen.

Jo Hye-Jin's jaw even dropped to the floor out of surprise upon seeing their systematic movements. They weren't using their current formation to hold out. It was actually the best formation for their party. It seemed that the chosen warrior party had gotten a lot of experience from clearing so many dungeons.

There were some details I could nitpick, but Rafael had made the decision himself, so I couldn't really say anything.

More importantly, he didn't really make a bad decision. They would also grow even stronger, especially Rafael. He had already found a place that would allow him to fight at his full power, after all. I didn't want to micromanage them, so I gave them simple instructions, and their formation slowly improved right under my eyes.

'This Coin is going to skyrocket! It definitely will!'

The meeting of the heroes of the past life and the chosen warrior. I was really happy to see them gradually adjusting to their roles, but I suddenly noticed something strange.

'No way… '

The sword-wielding queen suddenly reminded me of Kim Hyun-Sung.

'It can't be, right?'

Wait, no, the chosen warrior party reminded me of Kim Hyun-Sung.

I had no idea, but it felt like they were making preparations to fight Kim Hyun-Sung.

It looked like they were using the queen to practice. I wasn't sure if it was a side effect of the stupid conversation we had a few days ago, but I started imagining them on a battlefield against Kim Hyun-Sung.

The knight standing next to the priest, the mage channeling a protection spell to take the brunt of the boss' powerful and swift attacks, the hunting dog who had been tenaciously chasing after the boss like a leech, the archer and rogue duo firing their poisonous and lethal arrows, and finally, Rafael—the party leader.

Rafael directed the party members' movements while keeping an eye out for an opportunity to deal the finishing blow.

'No way… right? You guys aren't a raid party against Kim Hyun-Sung, right?'

It seemed that my remark back then had to have really bothered them. I thought Marian asked that question because it was fun, but now that I thought about it, her

question actually sounded pretty suspicious.

'Shit, there's no way. There's no way the children whom I raised would do something like that.'

I had to re-evaluate the atmosphere that had suddenly become serious.

Their expressions that reminded me of the Order fighting with their lives on the line and Rafael, who had been trying to make time to talk to me…

'They wouldn't do something like that.'

Doubt gripped my heart, but I was trying to suppress it. I didn't have any evidence, but I finally realized that the reason I had been trying to avoid facing it all together was that I had been brainwashing myself to believe that the Coin wouldn't plummet.

'He wouldn't do that. Commander Rafael won't do something like that… '

'Shit, is this coin really going to plummet? Will I really have to get rid of them all?'

'Why are you guys trying to make me get rid of you? You're my children!'

I felt dizzy because I had invested way too much to simply abandon this Coin.

'Nothing has been decided yet. I'm probably just… too sensitive. This isn't a raid party against Kim Hyun-Sung. There's no way. Yeah, nope.'

I thought of the heroes of Kim Hyun-Sung's past life as my children the moment Kim Hyun-Sung told me about them. There were only a few notable heroes out of the many heroes during his past life, so I decided to take really good care of those notable few.

'Our Rafael… '

It was exactly why I didn't abandon the Holy Sword Coin. I decided to raise them properly, and my heart broke because of it. I even hired an expensive tutor for them. I suddenly remembered how much I flattered Hee-Ra noona just for her to train him.

'No.'

His smile and tears were sincere. If he were hostile toward me, he would have already attempted to assassinate me long ago.

'What mistake did our Hyun-Sung do? Why are they acting like this?'

Just then, Rafael unleashed the finishing blow on the boss.

He turned toward me, and his eyes seemed like they were telling me that he had grown strong, that he would become a good son, and that my suffering was over.

I unknowingly nodded when I saw his gaze.

I decided to set my dumb thoughts aside.

"Hyung," said Rafael.

I approached him with a bright smile as he ran toward me excitedly, but I noticed him biting his lips.

"I'm—"

Park Lian abruptly emerged from the darkness and swung her two daggers toward Rafael's neck.

"Sorry, hyung," Rafael said.

'Don't kill him, damn it.'

Park Lian deserved a round of applause for noticing it so quickly, but it was ridiculous how she tried to kill him before listening to what he had to say. Park Lian's decision made it clear that Rafael had grown strong enough to become a threat.

Park Lian's expression was grim, while Rafael looked calm and composed, even though Park Lian's daggers were about to send his head flying into the air.

The last time Rafael went up against Park Lian, she sent him rolling on the ground, but this time, Park Lian was the one rolling on the ground.

Clang!

'I told you not to use your dual daggers.'

Swoosh!

Jo Hye-Jin hurled her spear at Rafael, but Rafael remained unperturbed.

Jo Hye-Jin stood frozen while staring at Rafael in shock.

Rafael's holy sword was pointed at my neck, and eight gray wings had spread wide open behind him.

"I won't kill you two," said Rafael.

"You…"

"Tell Kim Hyun-Sung to come here one week later. Tell him that I'll kill this person if he fails to come here by himself," Rafael instructed.

"…"

"I repeat: he has to come here by himself one week later. Please deliver my exact words to him, Miss Jo Hye-Jin," he added.

A heavy and deafening silence enveloped us.

'Damn it… why are you trying to commit suicide…?'

I had no choice but to accept that the Holy Sword Coin was going to the mantle rather than to the moon.

CHAPTER 635
ARE YOU GUYS A RAID PARTY AGAINST KIM HYUN-SUNG? (2)

Was this how parents felt upon discovering their children's betrayal? I felt like the blue chip stock I had firmly believed would go to the moon was suddenly delisted. The atmosphere was confusing, and I felt desperate.

'I can still solve this, right?'

I really couldn't let go of the Holy Sword Coin, even though it had fallen so deep that it was already in the mantle. I couldn't even imagine just how patient I had to be to resolve all this.

Honestly, I didn't really think that I was in danger. Rafael's sword was touching my neck, but I knew that he wasn't going to harm me. He apologized to me, and he was strangely considerate of me. I could feel him supporting me in case my legs grew weak. Saying that the kidnapper was being considerate of his hostage was honestly funny, but it wasn't that strange because I wasn't his target.

He wasn't hostile toward me.

However, the times we spent together, the memories, and the heartwarming times.

'Shit… '

He definitely wouldn't hurt me because Kim Hyun-Sung was his target. However, I had to find out why Rafael decided to target him. I was certain that there was some kind of misunderstanding here.

If I could resolve that misunderstanding, I could probably turn him back to the person he used to be, and we would be able to reminisce once more about the precious moments that we shared.

'My coins… my precious memories.'

The atmosphere had gotten so intense and thick that it felt like it was going to explode from the pressure. Jo Hye-Jin's petrified expression caught my attention. She looked as confused as me as well, as she frantically looked around to find a way to resolve all this.

I had spent a lot of time with her, but it was my first time seeing that kind of expression on her face.

'Actually, no… '

I had seen that expression before. The look on her face was the same as when the masked scum—the traitor of mankind and the one who had sinned against God—killed her during her past life.

The current situation was different from back then, but she seemed as determined as she had been during that fateful time in her past life. Her mouth fluttered open and close, seemingly at a loss for words.

Eventually, she placed her spear down on the ground and raised her hands

"Please let the sub guild master go. If you need a hostage, I should be more than enough," she said.

'You shouldn't have put your weapon down.'

To make things worse, she kicked her spear away from her. It seemed like she was trying to show them that she had no intention of fighting. It was really a dumb move. Of course, Rafael had promised that he wouldn't hurt her, but he could be lying.

'He might kill both of us. Why aren't you suspicious of him?'

"No, I need him, not you. As a hostage, you're worthless, Miss Jo Hye-Jin. I won't repeat myself. Go back and deliver my words," Rafael said.

"If there's something you want—"

"I already told you what I want a long time ago. Don't test my patience anymore," he interrupted.

"But…"

“I told you not to test my patience,” he repeated.

I wasn’t happy about the cold sensation on my neck.

One thing I was sure of was that I needed to calm things down.

“There’s no need to—”

My voice wouldn’t come out.

‘Shit… ’

Perhaps Jo Hye-Jin’s gaze bothered him because his sword pierced my thin neck.

‘What’s wrong with you? Are you trying to leave a scar on my neck?’

Park Lian was still on the floor and was being suppressed by Lee Joo-Hyuk with a sword on his neck. Park Lian was obviously angry, but she couldn’t do anything here.

The eight-winged Rafael was just…

‘Strong.’

The holy sword had completely acknowledged him. Stats-wise, he was stronger than Jo Hye-Jin. Obviously, the difference in experience would make a difference, but he was strong after being bestowed upon a power on the cusp of Mythic.

Rafael and his party members would win against Park Lian and Jo Hye-Jin. I wasn’t sure if Jo Hye-Jin was aware of that, but it seemed that she had come to the same conclusion as me.

‘He really has no intention of hurting me. He wants something.’

Jo Hye-Jin fell into deep contemplation, but there was no way the impatient Rafael would just stand by and watch. I had to do something here, so when I frowned slightly, he responded immediately.

“H-Hyung.”

He looked really surprised. It wasn’t the kind of expression you’d expect from a

kidnapper.

I was uncertain, but Rafael seemed worried about me.

'You haven't forgotten the memories we've made together, right?'

"Hyung! Are you okay? Hyung! *Ah!*" Rafael shouted.

I went limp and put all my soul into my acting. I acted like I was having a massive headache.

Jo Hye-Jin immediately said, "He needs rest!"

"*Uh, uh… ah…"* Rafael's reaction was shocking.

"Please put him down. If he gets too stressed, he'll get a seizure…" she warned.

"*Huh? Uh, ah…"*

"Hurry up and put him do—"

"D-Don't come any closer! Shit! Stay back!" he shouted.

Rafael started crying out of panic. It seemed that he had forgotten the fact that I could get a seizure during his plan. He wasn't sure whether he should listen to Jo Hye-Jin and put me down or keep holding onto me.

He held me tightly like a child who didn't want their toy to be taken away from them. I even saw a hint of madness in his eyes, and he seemed like he was questioning himself.

"He needs to be stabilized. Hurry up!" Jo Hye-Jin urged.

Park Lian and Jo Hye-Jin looked anxious.

It was supposed to be extremely obvious to them that I was just acting, considering the situation, but it seemed that the two weren't as quick-witted as I thought. Jo Hye-Jin's outburst was entirely out of character

"Hurry up and put him down! He has to breathe comfortably…" Jo Hye-Jin shouted.

“D-Don’t come any closer! I-I can take care of him. I can do it,” Rafael yelled.

“You…”

“Leave! Right now! Leave and deliver my message to Kim Hyun-Sung. Tell him… exactly what I told you earlier. That’s your job. That’s the only way we can save hyung. I’m going to protect him, so deliver my message to him!” he roared.

“…”

“H-Hurry up!” he shouted.

‘It backfired. Shit.’

Jo Hye-Jin nodded. She seemed to have realized that it would be a bad idea to provoke Rafael any further. It had to have been really difficult for her to leave because I was in excruciating pain.

“I trust that you’ll keep your promise,” Jo Hye-Jin said.

Jo Hye-Jin left, and Rafael turned around while carrying me. I felt weightless all of a sudden, but I couldn’t really react as I continued acting like I was in extreme pain.

Rafael was crying as he muttered, “H-Hyung…”

“…”

“Hyung… you’re okay, right? You’re fine, right?” Rafael asked.

I felt myself being taken somewhere. I heard a few doors open, and I felt something soft on my back, so he had to have probably placed me down on a bed or something.

“You’re okay, right? You’ll be fine. I-I can cure you,” he stuttered.

“*Ah, haa, haa…*”

“I can take care of you,” he said.

I breathed heavily as if I were in pain. I opened my eyes wide, and Rafael hurriedly took my coat off. It seemed he recalled Jo Hye-Jin telling him that I had to be able to

breathe comfortably.

I looked around and found myself in an extremely large room. It was a weird room to be in a dungeon, but I was convinced that we were still in the dungeon. It seemed that this had been the queen's bedroom, as it was extremely vast and luxurious.

I continued to breathe heavily while Rafael paced around anxiously. He looked beyond pallid, as he had no idea what to do. Just then, the Miracle Priest appeared, and I was sure that he was relieved to see her.

"I-Is he okay? Is hyung…"

"Let me take a look at him. One moment," Marian replied.

"What should I do? W-What should I do? Please hurry. Please…" he begged.

"P-Please calm down. It's my first time being in a situation like this… I'm sure he'll calm down since it's a temporary seizure. I'm sure…" she said.

"*Haa, haa, gasp…*"

Marian was confused because she had no idea what was going on. She kept pouring her holy power into me, but it was ineffective. They started talking about using a sleeping spell or something similar to a sleeping pill.

Meanwhile, I was deep in my thoughts.

I started thinking about what was going to happen after this.

'Shit, what should I do? Is this really going to be a serious problem?'

I would like it if he just returned me to Lindel. It would be great if he decided to just take me back to Lindel because I was suffering, but the problem was that Rafael seemed determined to keep me here.

Rafael wasn't planning on yielding, and I realized that when he started shouting at Jo Hye-Jin. I wasn't sure why he was acting this way, but he looked like he was trying to protect me rather than harm me.

I had no idea who he was trying to protect me from, but based on context clues…

'But why… '

He was trying to protect me from Kim Hyun-Sung.

I had no idea when everything went wrong, but…

'There's still time to clear up the misunderstanding.'

Kim Hyun-Sung would arrive here in exactly one week later. Meanwhile, the chosen warrior party will reorganize and recover, and it was my last chance to stop them.

To be exact, it was my last chance to save them.

Just then, a mage arrived.

Since I wasn't calming down, I was sure they were trying to cast a sleeping spell on me.

Rafael held the arms I was using to pull my hair out while Marian didn't stop infusing her holy power into me.

The mage started channeling a spell. I couldn't fall asleep here, so when I evened out my breathing, the mage canceled the spell. The mage probably thought that it was better to let me rest comfortably rather than force me to sleep.

I was starting to think that I was in trouble, but I was more worried about our lovely regressor.

'What should I do about her?'

I was worried about Jung Ha-Yan as well. Of course, based on Jo Hye-Jin's personality, I was sure she would take care of this without notifying the other members, but I couldn't deduce Kim Hyun-Sung's reaction.

'No.'

Jo Hye-Jin was aware that Rafael wouldn't harm me, so if Jo Hye-Jin told Kim Hyun-Sung that Rafael would never harm me…

'He would definitely not get that mad. Right? Right?'

I was sure he would take a rational approach to resolve this situation. I was sure that… there wouldn't be any bloodshed.

CHAPTER 636
ONE WEEK (1)

'How come he's late? I hope he's not doing this on purpose.'

"I really feel like going crazy. I'm already so busy, and he actually decided to reap the benefits all by himself. *Ha,* wow…"

I[1] turned and saw a pile of documents and energy drinks. The sight made me sigh. The guild was filled with competent administrative staffers, but there were so many things to do that his absence was affecting me a lot.

The first problem I had was sending catalysts and materials to Zone Five. Since I had to hide the distribution process for security purposes, I had to personally handle too many things. That wasn't all—I also had to take care of the tasks that Lee Ki-Young was supposed to do, so it wasn't an exaggeration to say that my work had doubled.

Actually, it would be 2.5 times more, to be exact.

'Looks like it's going to be another all-nighter for me.'

"Damn it. Just wait. I'm going to get my reward for this no matter what."

I wanted to write a list of things I wanted, but I didn't have time to do that right now. I heard the expedition was going to be a bit longer this time, but it was longer than I thought.

My Goddess' Hand Mirror suddenly rang.

[Unni, I'm going to need you to come here as soon as possible. It's urgent.]

"What's going on, Yeon-Soo?" I mumbled.

[It's really urgent. I sent the coordinates, so I think it's best if you ride your griffon here. Hurry and don't tell anyone. I'm not joking. You'll thank me once you're here.]

[What is it?]

[You'll have to come and see for yourself.]

Ha Yeon-Soo was a guild member I became very close to when I started working for the Black Swan Guild. I didn't find her message strange because we had been talking to each other every day recently, but her message bothered me.

It was all because she had contacted me using the emergency contact network. Using the network meant that there was significant trouble. It seemed that I would have to deal with another issue on top of the issues I was already handling.

The coordinates on the hand mirror showed a forest located not too far from Lindel.

[You have to come. It's really urgent.]

"Alright, alright. Damn it," I cursed.

[Let's just meet in Lindel.]

[No, I can't go to Lindel, and it's a bit of a stressful issue to tell you through messages.]

"…"

'What if she's setting all of this up to kill me?'

It was suspicious. I considered her as one of my people, but human relationships were easily ruined by insignificant profits.

'No, she's not that stupid.'

I thought about it for a bit, but I completely dismissed the possibility because she knew the amount of power she possessed, and she wouldn't do something so dumb. I had a lot of doubts, so I would probably have more guards than usual…

'I trust you, Yeon-Soo. Our relationship isn't going to end here, right?'

I started walking away, and I saw familiar faces when I opened the door.

“Are you going out, unni?” a girl asked.

“Yeah, prepare my griffon. I’m going out now,” I replied.

“Where are you going? If you’re going out to meet the chairman, should we make preparations like we normally do?” she asked.

“No, I’m not. Just give me a jacket or something. Everyone else is resting, right?” I asked.

“Yes.”

“Bring me three useful guards. They have to be people who can keep a secret,” I requested.

“Okay.”

“*Ah*, I’m going out secretly, so bring me a mage who can use invisibility magic,” I added.

“Okay, I’ll get ready,” the girl said.

As I was walking towards the airfield, complicated thoughts filled my head. Of course, they weren’t anything serious. It was mostly about what was happening and knowing that I was pulling an all-nighter.

However, the moment I reached the coordinates Ha Yeon-Soo sent me, I couldn’t help but curse because I saw a face I had been seeing a lot lately. I was convinced that we wouldn’t get along, so I didn’t really like to visit her, but I had to see her often recently.

I became familiar with her face because she was the one who had said that the scummy bastard was suffering from amnesia. She was the third strongest member of the Blue Guild, and she was a skilled adventurer whom Kim Hyun-Sung trusted a lot.

I wasn’t sure why, but she didn’t look as tidy as usual.

Her hair was messy, and it looked like she had been rolling on mud.

She was completely out of mana and stamina.

She was unconscious, so something had to have happened, which made me place my hand on my forehead. One of my worst fears had just become a reality. Something happened in the dungeon. I bit my lips, but the sight in front of me didn't disappear.

When I sighed, I heard Yeon-Soo's voice.

"I was right, right? I told you you would thank me."

"What happened? Actually, when did you find her? Are there any traces?" I asked.

"I knew you would ask, so I did… I'm not certain, but I think she's been running all the way from the dungeon," she replied.

"It was the Queen's Tomb, right? It's pretty far, and it's not a distance a human can run," I said.

"That's why a skilled adventurer like her is completely out of stamina. She didn't have any list of contacts, her spear, or even a bag. Her destination is Lindel, so it's highly likely she's trying to deliver a message. I don't think she failed to clear a dungeon, so I'm assuming something happened inside.

"She's unconscious because she rolled down all the way from there, even though she no longer has any stamina and mana. I think it worked out in her favor," she explained.

"How come?" I asked.

"What do you mean why? She could have died if she had forcefully continued her journey to Lindel. I think she lost consciousness while trying to crawl to Lindel… she's lucky," she answered.

"Are you guys the first ones to find her?" I asked.

"No," she answered.

"So you just let the people who first found her… waltz into Lindel?" I questioned.

"We made sure they keep their mouths shut," she informed.

"Make sure you take care of them. Try waking her up," I ordered.

“Can’t you… at least say thank you?” she complained.

“Of course I can. Come here, Yeon-Soo. I’ll give you a big hug. You did really well. You saved Lindel,” I told her.

“You’re indebted to me. Don’t forget,” she said.

“I’ll make sure to pay you back with interest, so don’t worry. Feed her a Fatigue Recovery Potion, and I want the rest of you to get out. Yeon-Soo, you… Actually, you can stay,” I ordered.

“She’ll probably wake up soon,” she said.

I approached her slowly, but she didn’t look like she was going to wake up anytime soon. The moment I touched her cheeks while thinking that she was prettier than I thought, she opened her eyes. By the time I realized what was going on, I already lost my balance. The woman pulled my sleeve with her left hand and was wielding a branch with her right hand.

I failed to react in time. The reason I saw the sharp branch aiming for my neck was that Ha Yeon-Soo had grabbed the woman’s wrist.

“I-I almost died,” I stuttered.

“That was dangerous, unni,” Ha Yeon-Soo said.

“Wait, she’s still unconscious?” I questioned.

“She’ll start waking up soon. I think she moved instinctively just now, but she’s exactly like the rumors. I should ask her to eat with me later,” she said.

“*Ah*, *ugh…*”

“Hey, do you remember me?” I asked.

“Who… where…” the woman asked.

“I’m Lee Ji-Hye from the Continental Protection Management Committee. I’m in a romantic relationship with your sub guild master. We’ve met before, right? We worked a few times before. Yeon-Soo, splash some water on her,” I ordered.

"…"

"Do you recognize me? Stop pulling on my sleeve. You're going to rip it off," I told her.

"Sub… Guild Master… Kidnap, Rafael…" Lee Ji-Hye mumbled.

'He's in trouble.'

The keywords made me understand what happened. I knew it would be a similar situation, but…

'Why?'

I started having questions.

"One week… later… guild master… to the dungeon… alone… I have to deliver…" she mumbled.

"What?" I asked.

"I have to deliver…" she repeated.

'Shit… is this some kind of crazy hostage situation?'

I couldn't understand the situation. My heart raced as I thought of the possibility, but I wasn't worried for a reason because Doom Ki-Young was a liar.

Bothersome thoughts filled my head, but I didn't think he was in mortal danger. If he really were in danger, he would have escaped that situation, even if it meant abandoning the continent. Wasn't the peaceful continent proof that Lee Ki-Young was safe? The problem was how we were going to get through this situation.

'Rafael… Rafael… '

"Unni, isn't this a serious situation?" Ha Yeon-Soo asked.

"No need to make a big deal out of it. We're going to take care of this as quietly as possible," I told her.

"How come? A-Are you worried things are going to get chaotic? Well, if word gets out

that the chairman was kidnapped…"

'No, it's not because of that.'

I was worried about that as well, as the media would definitely go crazy upon hearing that the chairman was kidnapped. The continent would grieve once more, and there would be prayer sessions everywhere.

Father Basel would yell and say that he would immediately dispatch the holy knights. Oscar, the leader of the Sacred Democratic Country, would immediately declare a national crisis.

The plague dragon would roar once more, and the system that was running smoothly would stop as if there were an outage. I could already tell what was going to happen, as it had already happened before.

However, the Blue Guild's reaction was what worried me the most and among them, the crazy bitch who had been doing crazy things was the one I was most worried about.

'Jung Ha-Yan… She can't find out no matter what.'

Jung Ha-Yan would definitely do something unimaginable once she heard that Lee Ki-Young was kidnapped. It was easy to deduce what she would do if one were to just look at her colorful history.

More importantly, Lee Ki-Young didn't want something like that to happen.

"I'm going to head to the Blue Guild right now. Ask this woman exactly what happened and text it to me," I ordered.

"W-What are you going to do?" she asked.

"What do you mean? I need to notify Kim Hyun-Sung," I told her.

"Do you think it will be okay?" she asked.

"Probably. I need to convince him no matter what. He's a pretty reasonable guy, and Rafael wants him. I must notify him and think about what we should do afterward. We can negotiate if necessary. It looks like Rafael wants something… so I should let

him know," I explained.

I started walking while thinking that I seemed to be traveling a lot today. I soon reached the Blue Guild. I checked Ha Yeon-Soo's message to confirm just what actually happened, and then I thought about what I was going to say to Kim Hyun-Sung.

It felt like I was about to go and defend my thesis. I felt nervous, but I was confident because he was unlike Jung Ha-Yan, who was completely unreasonable.

I entered after knocking on the door, and I saw his usual cold expression. I wasn't sure why, but he seemed kind of depressed. He sighed as if telling me that I had visited him at the wrong time.

"It's been a while, Guild Master of Blue," I greeted.

"Why are you here?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

"I don't know… how to tell you this… I'll get straight to the point. I think Mr. Ki-Young has been kidnapped," I said.

"…"

"The Black Swan Guild discovered Miss Jo Hye-Jin, who left the dungeon and was heading toward Lindel. Rafael's party has kidnapped Mr. Ki-Young, and he demands that one week later…" I paused.

"…"

"He said if you don't come… h-he'll… kill him… So, one week later… you must… head to the dungeon…" I stuttered.

"…"

'What's going on… '

All of a sudden, my jaw was trembling, and my legs were growing weak. I tried my best to avoid collapsing to the ground. My mind was fine, but my body wasn't listening to me. Goosebumps broke out all over me, and it was getting difficult for me to breathe.

‘Shit… What’s going on? What’s happening, damn it?’

Kim Hyun-Sung was exuding such aura despite suppressing his emotions. I could feel hostility radiating from him.

“…”

“…”

‘Ah, this is bad. It’s over.’

I also realized something else the moment I saw his grim look. I couldn’t quite describe his expression as he slowly left the room. I wanted to grab his arm to ask him if he wanted to come up with a plan, but this was already out of my hands.

“I’ll just go back to work… This is none of my business, so I’ll just let them take care of it,” I said.

It was rare to get into two life-or-death situations in a day. Today wasn’t a good day, so I thought it would be best for me to return to my room and finish my work. As for Lee Ki-Young, he was probably…

‘Having a hearty meal right now.’

I was a hundred percent certain.

* * *

“It’s melting in my[2] mouth…”

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1. Lee Ji-Hye’s POV ☜

2. Lee Ki-Young’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 637
ONE WEEK (2)

'I wonder who cooked it.'

"It's melting in my mouth."

I wanted to eat another bite, but I couldn't because of my pride. In addition, I couldn't really eat all of this. I did have a bite because of the fragrant smell, but finishing this food meant that I was okay with the current situation.

To make things worse, when we were at the last stage of clearing the dungeon, porridge was the only food we could eat because the dungeon was so big.

'Where were they hiding this?'

It made sense to say that this was all planned from the start. I assumed it, but after seeing this extravagant feast, I became even more certain of it.

'There's a limit to how much you can carry in your bag. I wonder if they have food for themselves.'

The feast was so grand that I started worrying about useless things. It was pretty simple to call it a feast, but having food like this is pretty good inside a dungeon. The quality was way better than when the Blue Guild first started going to dungeons.

Unfortunately, I had to throw away all this food.

I had to at least show that I couldn't accept this situation so that I would have a chance of convincing Rafael. Rather than ranting, staying quiet would probably be more effective. Making the other person nervous was necessary to negotiate with them.

Just then, I felt someone's presence, and I heard them knocking on the large door.

It was obvious who it was.

“I’m coming in, hyung,” Rafael said.

“…”

“Have you eaten?” he asked.

“…”

Without saying a word, I placed my hand on the table and swung my arm.

Crash!

The delicious food fell to the ground, and the tableware shattered.

He bit his lips at the sight.

I showed hostility by glaring at him. I wanted him to know that I wasn’t going to eat the food that he gave me. It seemed that he didn’t expect such a cold reaction from me. He probably thought that I would be less angry over time, but we all know that it was difficult for me to forgive and forget once I was hurt.

“It seems like it didn’t suit your taste,” he said.

‘No, it was really delicious. It really was. I honestly wanted to eat it all, but… I can’t because of my ego.’

“I-I’ll bring you something else, or is there a specific dish you want to eat?” he asked.

‘Mirror Salmon.’

“We have Mirror Salmon. Would you like to have that?” he asked.

‘Wait, how did you bring that here? Actually, I don’t need that right now.’

I threw a wine glass at him to tell him that I didn’t want to talk to him, and he stood still to take the hit.

‘That was my favorite wine.’

It was kind of a waste. I shouldn’t have thrown that to him. Rafael was shocked, but

he didn't say anything. He even started picking up the fragments of the shattered tableware on the ground with a bitter smile.

"You'll get hurt if you step on them."

He sounded really sad as he said that, but I didn't even glance at him.

"It doesn't matter what you think of me, hyung," Rafael said.

"…"

"How are you feeling? Are you okay?" he asked.

"…"

"I'm sure you're really surprised, but…"

"Get out," I said.

"…"

I didn't need to say anything else. I saw his desolate back profile as he sighed, but I didn't bother looking at him. I had many things to say, but I decided to stay quiet because I thought it would be better to try talking to him tomorrow or the day afterward.

Of course, I wasn't sure if he would understand, but this was a build-up to that moment.

I was being locked up in here, but I had to show that I was the dominant one here.

It looked like I was just making a mess, but this build-up was important.

'I can convince him.'

It was too early to show him that I loved him.

I didn't like the current situation, but I couldn't just let these guys go that easily since I raised them myself.

If they were ordinary thugs, I would have waited for Kim Hyun-Sung to come charging in and deal with these guys, but I saw potential in this party, especially in Rafael.

I had invested so much time in him. It would be a massive waste to just throw him away now that he had awakened with eight wings.

'I have enough time.'

I had to stop these suicidal people from throwing themselves into the fire. Of course, the situation outside was just as important as convincing Rafael. It was important to know Kim Hyun-Sung and the others' reactions. For now, the best-case scenario was…

'It would be Hyun-Sung being the only person who knows about all this.'

The worst-case scenario would be the entire continent finding out. I didn't want them to open up prayer sessions, plan out a rescue mission, or stop every task that had been going smoothly just for my sake.

I was also worried about Jung Ha-Yan and Cha Hee-Ra. As for Lee Ji-Hye… she was quick-witted, so she would definitely take care of the media.

'But I can't let this get out of hand.'

It was better to handle this quietly to the extent that I could say, *"Did that actually happen?"*

I wanted to know what was happening outside, but I didn't have a Goddess' Hand Mirror. My alchemy kit or catalysts had been confiscated as well, so I couldn't create anything. Of course, a solution still existed.

I wondered if this would work, but I believed that it would work.

'Benigoa, I'd like to see the situation outside… Can you show me?'

"…"

'Benigoa? Your lovely follower, Lee Ki-Young, is greeting you directly like this. What are you doing that you're not replying right away?'

"…"

'Benigoa?'

[An average-ranked Forced Quest has been activated.]

[L-Lee Ki-Young! My lovely Lee Ki-Young! D-Did you call for me? (0/1)]

'I'd like to see the situation outside… but I don't have your hand mirror.'

[*Ah*, okay… I understand what you're saying. You're… curious about what the other humans are doing right now, right? (0/1)]

'I'm glad you're quick to understand.'

[But you know… Well, I would like to give you what you want, but… the current situation isn't that great… You know what's going on. I've been branded by the higher-ups, so I'm under surveillance right now… (0/1)]

'…'

[I'm eager to help out my precious Lee Ki-Young, but… as you know, it's highly likely that the higher-ups will think badly of me if a goddess gets too involved in the world of mortals… There are actually some prohibited actions… (0/1)]

'I know that an issue cannot be resolved with just a wish or a prayer. I also know that you have to be an observer as much as possible. That's why I'm making a small request.'

[B-But… (0/1)]

'If you think about it, it's not like I'm asking you to help me get out of here, and I'm not asking you to fix this problem I have… it's just a small request—a very small request.'

[I already told you, Lee Ki-Young. If you trust the demons… This is all because of Lucifer… (0/1)]

'So are you saying this is my fault? I wonder who got me into this mess in the first place… '

[…(0/1)]

'Hurry up and show me already. I don't have time. I need to see what's going on right now.'

[I-It's because I can't show it to you. In order to fulfill your wish, I have no choice but to send you a telescope… It's illegal to send heavenly items to h-humans. Wouldn't it be better if I told you what's happening? (0/1)]

'Huh?'

[Yeah, that… p-probably won't do. Still, I can't… give a human the telescope… Obviously, you're not an ordinary human, but… since you're still in the body of a mortal, the same law applies to you as well. (0/1)]

'You're not giving it to me. You're letting me borrow it.'

[…(0/1)]

'So you call it a telescope… Hahahaha, you don't have to worry too much, Benigoa. You're just letting me borrow it. I'll return it all once I'm done, so don't worry. It won't take long either… Is it too precious that you don't want to let me borrow it? I trust that you're not going to abandon your precious follower, who has been preparing for your trial every day in case worse comes to worst for you.'

[I would never abandon you. Yeah, I would never. However… (0/1)]

'Just let me borrow it. You can't even do this for me? We're in a give-and-take relationship.'

[If you wait just a little bit… I'm being very careful about even the smallest detail… (0/1)]

'…'

[…(0/1)]

'Fine, I won't borrow it. I can't believe how stingy a goddess is… '

[What? (0/1)]

'Do I really need to tell you that we should just go our separate ways?'

[*Huh*? What? (0/1)]

'I'll do my best to live my life, so you do your best with your problem… Do you really want me to say this to you? Do you want me to say—your trial is no longer my problem, and I won't even come in as a witness—Ah!

'I'm sure you're thinking that I'll get stuck between a rock and a hard place if I were to do such a thing, but nope. There are many beings out there who want me to go to their side. I can just take care of my own problems, then.

'Man, it looks like I made a big mistake. I asked too much of you. This lowly mortal failed to know his place and made you, Goddess Benigoa, uncomfortable with his request.'

[T-That's not what I meant. What I mean is… (0/1)]

'I'm just going to borrow it real quick. I'm going to return it to you as soon as possible… Is it that difficult to do that? Do you know how difficult it was to clean up after your mess? Yet, you won't even let me borrow things. You even gave me a quest not to abandon you, but now that your loyal follower is in trouble, you're actually the one trying to abandon me here?

'Do you think I'm acting like this because I want that telescope or whatever for myself? I have fulfilled everything you wanted. Even the things that I didn't want to do. Do you agree or not? Do you or don't you?'

[I-I mean… (0/1)]

'Don't even bother saving the continent! Just don't! You think I'm doing this because I really want that telescope?'

[C-Calm down… Lee Ki-Young… Calm down… (0/1)]

'The continent is in danger!'

I flipped the table before me and inwardly shouted with all my might.

Benigoa seemed shocked. As I mentioned earlier, I wasn't asking for too much at all. I was just a lowly mortal, but I knew what was happening up there. Actions that could have a direct influence on a situation were completely prohibited, but I was

convinced that there wouldn't be any issues to just look at the situation.

I could definitely borrow the telescope for a bit. Of course, she would probably get criticized for it, as she was under surveillance. However, I didn't have the confidence to keep spending my time like this without knowing what was happening outside.

Benigoa couldn't afford to abandon me, so she already knew the answer that she had to take. I couldn't help but smile when I heard what she said next.

[T-Then just for a moment… You have to return it, okay? If they suddenly come here to inspect me… I'll be in huge trouble. If they find out that you took my telescope during the inspection, things will become really troublesome. I-I trust you, Lee Ki-Young. You trust me as well, right? (0/1)]

'We share a common destiny. If I don't trust you, you won't have anyone else on your side.'

[Yeah, that's right. We share a common destiny. Y-You're not going to abandon me, right? I even did this for you… You're not going to leave me later, right? (0/1)]

'I will never abandon you. You know I've actually been preparing for your trial whenever I have free time these days, so you have to hang in there. Always remember—the only way to survival is perseverance.'

[I-I will, Lee Ki-Young. I'll hang in there just for you, so you hang in there as well. Let's both do our best. W-We… share a common destiny, after all. (0/1)]

'Of course.'

[Elune's Telescope has been imbued into Mind's Eye.]

[Mind's Eye is now Mythic-rank.]

I wasn't sure how she got her hands on Elune's telescope, but…

'Benigoa… Wow, she's something else.'

I couldn't help but start thinking that way.

CHAPTER 638
ONE WEEK (3)

I was sure that the one who was the most shocked by the turn of events at the moment wasn't Kim Hyun-Sung or Jo Hye-Jin. It had to be Elune. Well, it was none of my business. I decided to just let them take care of their problems while I take care of mine.

I was worried that things would become even worse if they found out that Benigoa had allowed me to borrow the telescope, but wouldn't it mean that I would profit if Elune were sacrificed if they found out what Benigoa had done?

I couldn't help but think that Benigoa had the same thought as me, as it felt like we were actually in the same boat at the moment. I felt proud at the thought that the incompetent Benigoa had actually made the right choice.

'I don't have time for this. I need to check the situation.'

I felt like going crazy out of curiosity about what was happening outside. I activated Mind's Eye, and my view completely changed. It was an unfamiliar feeling.

'It's great.'

It felt like I was playing two different videos on the same monitor. My left eye and right eye were showing different things. I grabbed my head because the temporary pain made me feel dizzy, but it didn't take me that long to adjust.

However, I felt like my eyes were going to burst. If I was feeling this way despite having Mind's Eye, it obviously wasn't made for ordinary humans. There was no way ordinary humans could handle the telescope.

I moved my head as if I were moving a camera, and I saw the peaceful Lindel.

I couldn't help but feel relieved at the thought that the worst-case scenario didn't happen.

Lindel was peaceful, which meant that Jo Hye-Jin hadn't told everyone what happened. I couldn't help but smile when I saw the energetic denizens of Lindel going about their daily lives.

'I believed in you, Hye-Jin. I knew you'd handle this quietly.'

Both Lindel and Zone Five were quiet.

It seemed they just thought that the expedition was taking longer than usual.

'But where is she? She's safe, right? I think she's already in Lindel… '

I thought that way, but the dungeon and Lindel were too far from each other that there was no way she could have already arrived at Lindel.

Jo Hye-Jin was powerful and was basically a monster among monsters, but she couldn't possibly cover such a massive distance without taking breaks.

I nodded in satisfaction, but I quickly got worried upon realizing that I couldn't actually find Jo Hye-Jin. I looked around Lindel just in case, but I couldn't find her anywhere. She wasn't even in the Blue Guild.

Elena and Yoo Ah-Young looked like they were out, while Sun Hee-Young looked like she was focused on her work as usual. The only ones who caught my attention were the Park-Ki-Ri siblings, who weren't competent enough to do administrative work.

They looked so peaceful talking to each other while drinking tea.

- I have a bad feeling… I think I should go to hyung-nim…

- What's wrong?

- I think I can hear his voice… like he's asking for my help… Sometimes, when I'm like this, I feel like he's looking at me.

- That sounds stupid.

- It's not stupid. I told you many times that even when hyung-nim and I are physically apart, our hearts are actually connected…

- Impossible.

- *Hahaha*. You must be tired, Mr. Deok-Gu.

- It's true. I think he's in danger. It's been a while since they entered that dungeon, and I feel like he's shouting at me right now to save him.

'Don't save me, man.'

I had to look away for a moment because if I continued looking at that pig, I had a feeling that I wouldn't be able to get my money's worth.

It was great that he still had no idea what happened. I still had no clue about Jo Hye-Jin's whereabouts, but I still felt relieved.

'At least he won't go around telling people what happened… '

I tried looking for Jo Hye-Jin, but I turned my attention to Zone Five—where Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora were located.

I was already here, so I thought that it wouldn't be a bad idea to take a look.

I went underground and saw someone working hard. The person moving their hands with an anxious face was definitely Han Sora. I knew why she was so anxious. I turned and saw Jung Ha-Yan staring at her Goddess' Hand Mirror.

- H-H-He's late…

- Certain… dungeons… there are… certain dungeons where mana waves don't reach. I-I'm sure the sub guild master is worried about you as well. I'm sure… he's unable to contact you due to an unavoidable situation…

- Y-Y-You… think so…

- Yes…

- T-The priest… in Rafael's party that went with him… looked pretty…

- *Ah*, you mean that Miracle Priest or whatever? She looked pretty ordinary to me, and she's definitely not his type. While working together last time… he told me that

you're his ideal type. He told me not to tell you because he was embarrassed…

- R-Really?

Of course, I couldn't remember telling her that. It seemed like Han Sora's social skill was working in overdrive at the moment, as she was currently on the border between life and death.

I felt bad because Han Sora was desperately trying to calm Jung Ha-Yan, and I also couldn't help but think that Han Sora was indispensable to me. She was basically a walking angry meter for Jung Ha-Yan, and she could even assuage Jung Ha-Yan's fury.

Jung Ha-Yan should have been extremely angry at the moment, but right now, she wasn't *that* angry. She was pouting, but that was it. Actually, she was smiling because of Han Sora's words just now.

This place was just as peaceful as Lindel. I noticed Jung Ha-Yan suddenly entering my room, but I didn't want to see what she was going to do there.

Han Sora also pretended that she hadn't seen anything.

It seemed like Jung Ha-Yan was calm for now, so I felt relieved.

Obviously, she was unaware of the kidnapping case.

'Is Hye-Jin coming?'

I couldn't find her, but…

'Is it really safe for me to assume that she's already at Lindel, and I just couldn't find her?'

If she truly had no plans of telling the world about what had transpired, then there was only one reason I could think of as to why I couldn't find her. She probably thought that it was better to be discreet here.

Otherwise, I would have already found her alongside the other guild members.

If my assumption was right, and she actually ran with all her might from the dungeon all the way to Lindel, she was definitely out of stamina and mana at the

moment. If that was the case, Kim Hyun-Sung had to be nursing her at the moment.

"The situation isn't that bad."

It was handled a lot better than I thought, and I felt at peace at the thought that Kim Hyun-Sung didn't contact Jung Ha-Yan. If Jung Ha-Yan got up, she would probably teleport herself in front of the dungeon.

Fortunately, Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora were going about their daily lives. She probably wouldn't do anything reckless like doing something similar to teleporting to Rimoura's nest during the Doom Ki-Young incident.

Jo Hye-Jin was probably somewhere, thinking about how to negotiate with Rafael.

'Is she having some kind of meeting with Miss Kim Mi-Young at a secret location?'

I tried to think positively, but the problem was that I couldn't find Kim Hyun-Sung anywhere. I looked everywhere, but I couldn't find even his shadow. He wasn't at the outdoor training ground or at his personal training ground.

He wasn't at the cafeteria, office, or his room.

'Is he with Hye-Jin? Are they having a meeting or something? What's going on? You guys didn't make a secret meeting room without me knowing, right?'

I started to feel anxious, and I started imagining things I didn't want to imagine.

'Is he really mad? He didn't lose control of himself… or anything like that, right? It's not that he didn't contact Jung Ha-Yan. What if he couldn't contact her?'

What if Kim Hyun-Sung was so mad that he didn't even think about using her Teleport?

What if he was so mad that he couldn't even think straight at all?

'Shit… '

I was happy at the thought, as it meant that he was *that* worried about me. It was like a cheesy cliche involving the prince saving the princess locked up in the demon king's castle. However, my joy lasted only for a brief moment when I realized that his

opponent wasn't the demon king but the chosen warrior.

I found a moment of peace, but I was starting to feel desperate. When I looked up out of curiosity, I saw the entire road that connected Lindel and the dungeon. Then, I saw a blurry vision of a figure running so fast that my eyes couldn't keep up with it.

'Fuck… '

The figure definitely belonged to Kim Hyun-Sung. I thought he would at least ride his griffon to come here, but it seemed that he felt like he didn't have the luxury to even prepare his griffon.

The nearby beasts and monsters scattered as if there were an oncoming typhoon; innocent birds even left their nests to evacuate somewhere. He actually looked like a Mythic-rank raid monster; no exaggerations here.

He was running while unleashing a hostility so powerful it was palpable. I started trembling even though I was staring at him from afar, so I could only imagine just how the nearby beasts and monsters felt upon seeing him.

I had never seen such a serious look on Kim Hyun-Sung, and he definitely never had that kind of look, even during the Doom Ki-Young incident. Back then, he was determined to save me no matter what, but his current expression made it obvious that he would kill his target no matter what.

Our lovely regressor's current expression looked completely unfamiliar to me.

'Ah, shit. It's fucked.'

There was no way I could save the chosen warrior party at this point. No negotiations would occur. The only ending to this chapter was a complete disaster, and I immediately started looking for a shoulder to lean on at the realization.

The most reliable person whose shoulder I could rely on at the moment and the only one capable of wrapping up such a severe wound was none other than…

'Ji-Hye noona. She's the only one.'

She was quick-witted, and I was sure her information network had already notified her that Kim Hyun-Sung was heading toward the dungeon.

'You don't like your plan getting ruined either. You remember us drinking wine while talking about making our chosen warrior party go to the moon, right? I'm sure you already knew that this would happen after seeing Hyun-Sung leave. You prepared something, right? You can fix this, right?'

The only person I could rely on right now was my soulmate.

'Wait, shit… '

However, I seemed to have overlooked one thing.

'Hold on… '

She was way more quick-witted than I thought.

'Wait, why is Jo Hye-Jin there?'

Jo Hye-Jin was lying unconscious on Lee Ji-Hye's bed.

'Ha Yeon-Soo? That's Ha Yeon-Soo, right?'

Ha Yeon-Soo was wearing face masks with Lee Ji-Hye while lying down. To make things worse, she even placed a face mask on Jo Hye-Jin's face, who seemed to be in a deep sleep. I was sure it was just a sweet break after work, but…

- She has nice skin, even though she doesn't seem like the type to take care of her skin.

- People like her are usually like that, unni. Their mana is pure… and it shows in their appearance. If you add more points to your Magic, your skill will get better than it is right now *Ah*, of course, you look great right now, too.

- Of course. Do you know how much this thing is?

My eyes landed on the nearby desk, and I saw a note on the desk.

[I'm leaving a message because I have a feeling you'll find me. Actually, you might even be watching right now. You're watching, right? *Ah*, I should apologize first.]

'No, don't apologize… please don't… '

[I did my best to fix it, but this… this is beyond my capabilities, so I decided not to get involved anymore. I had two close shaves with death today, and I can't really stop the Guild Master of the Blue Guild from doing whatever he wants.

Anyway, don't be sad. I have a legitimate excuse. How could I have stopped him when he ran out like a madman upon hearing the news? I would have died if I had attempted to stop him by talking about coming up with a plan or whatever.

I really want to help, but I can't do anything, so I just sold and cut losses. My hands are completely off of this, so this matter is in your hands now, Oppa.

P.S. I think you should really start selling soon. *Ah,* we can't let the public know, so I'm going to keep Jo Hye-Jin here with me for the time being. This is the best that I can do, so don't get too mad at me.]

'Noona, damn it… why did you sell without telling me.'

An investor cutting their losses and selling a stock at the brink of getting delisted was a smart move, but…

'What about the others?'

I was still holding the bag, so the news was like a bolt from out of the blue to me.

CHAPTER 639
DON'T LOSE (1)

'Lee Ji-Hye… Lee Ji-Hye, damn it.'

I realized just then that our promise to sell and buy coins together had just gone out the window. She sold her bags so fast that it was actually mind-boggling. I couldn't help but question if she purchased those coins with a moonshot in mind rather than the long-term profits.

I knew that her work back on Earth was related to finances, but she sold the coins that we had bought together at the perfect timing to the extent that it was actually suspicious. Of course, I was thankful for the note, but I still felt resentment.

'Hye-Jin… Hye-Jin, why are you just lying there? You're not sick, are you? I hope you didn't overexert yourself. So the Black Swan Guild found you? I guess that's why you're with them?'

I was both thankful and worried for Jo Hye-Jin, but I had to push these feelings aside for now because I had to figure out what was going on first.

Lee Ji-Hye's note was great, but there was still a lot of missing information.

One of the few things I was able to confirm was that she went over to Kim Hyun-Sung herself. In that case, it was clear that the situation I had drawn in my head had become a reality.

Jo Hye-Jin delivered the message to Lee Ji-Hye, and Lee Ji-Hye delivered the message to Kim Hyun-Sung. I figured that Lee Ji-Hye had to be the one who had made the decision to minimize chaos as much as possible.

Lee Ji-Hye was at peace, but that kind of emotion could only appear in people who had completely given up. I couldn't quite take my eyes off of her as she lay on the bed in peace.

- Her hands are rough.

- Well, she has been training a lot. This is *the* Jo Hye-Jin we're talking about here. She's known for being a training maniac.

- *Hm*, since we don't have anything to do, how about we do her nails?

- Can we?

- She's sleeping, anyway. You said she wasn't going to wake up anytime soon, right? Let's paint her nails blue.

I was jealous because Lee Ji-Hye was at peace while I was as anxious as ants on a hot pan. If I could, I would have already sold my coins and cut my losses for the sake of peace, but I had invested too much money to just cut my losses.

I also started to become envious of Jo Hye-Jin, whom they were taking care of while she was asleep. Lee Ji-Hye had helped me, even though it was just the bare minimum.

I looked back at Kim Hyun-Sung, but he was still running like a madman while biting his lips. He was actually running in a straight line, and he cut down everything in his path to do that, regardless of whether they were terrain, monsters, or trees.

'We're screwed. We're really screwed.'

I started to get worried that the Queen's Tomb would soon become a slaughterhouse.

Right now, I was staring at the Kim Hyun-Sung of our past lives. He was full of spite and resentment. Obviously, what the chosen warrior party had done had truly aroused his fury.

'He's probably going to be here soon, right? Right?'

There was no way he would wait until a week later. He was making a beeline for the Queen's Tomb. Meanwhile, the chosen warrior party seemed to be unaware that the Grim Reaper was getting closer because they were still working things out internally.

'How long do I have until he arrives here?'

I couldn't deduce it accurately, but I thought he would reach us in just three hours.

Yes, Kim Hyun-Sung would reach the Queen's Tomb in just three hours—that was

how desperate and furious he was—no, he would probably reach us in an hour. I thought I had time to spare, but the time I had to spare was shorter than I initially expected, so I bit my lips out of frustration.

Even worse, I couldn't think of anything else aside from my *"I loved you, Rafael,"* plan.

'I need to convince him right now.'

However, my body wouldn't listen to me. I stood up in a hurry at the thought that I didn't have time to ponder about this any longer, but my head started spinning.

I lost my balance and collapsed.

'What's wrong with me? What's going on, damn it?'

"*Ah*… shit."

It had to be a side-effect of using Elune's Telescope for too long.

I grabbed my head at the sudden headache, and the door was flung open.

"Hyung! Hyung! Hyung!!" Rafael called out.

The surprised Rafael carried me to the bed, but a soft bed wouldn't stop my headache.

It would've been nice if I were acting, but I was actually in agonizing pain this time. I felt like my head was going to split open. The constant throbbing seemed to be affecting my frontal lobe, so I couldn't speak, even though I wanted to ask for Rafael's help.

"*Haaa, haaa…*"

"Are you okay? Are you…"

'No, it's so painful I feel like dying, man. I'm actually in pain, damn it.'

It was so painful that I couldn't help but think if Elune had cursed me through the telescope.

Anyway, Kim Hyun-Sung was coming, and I had to tell Rafael, but I couldn't quite talk.

"Run… away…" I muttered.

'Run, man. Kim Hyun-Sung is coming. You should at least live for now, even if it means fixing the problem later on. You just have to live.'

"What? W-What are you talking about?" Rafael asked.

"Y-You have to… run," I repeated.

'Run now. You have to run no matter what.'

"Hyung? Hyung? Can you see me? Do you know who I am?" he questioned.

"Kim Hyun-Sung… is coming…" I said.

"Hyung?"

"Leave… me… and just… run…" I told him.

'I'll talk it out with Hyun-Sung, so just run away, damn it. Run, damn it. You don't have time.'

I wish this kid would understand what I was saying. I was worried that he would interpret my words differently, so I just told him to run, which would leave no room for any misunderstanding.

'Kim Hyun-Sung is coming, so run.'

"Die…"

'You're definitely going to die.'

"Bastard…" he cursed.

'What?'

"Kim Hyun-Sung, that bastard… Bastard!" he yelled.

“What?” I questioned.

He stomped with his right foot and roared.

I wasn’t sure, but I had an idea about the conclusion he had reached.

‘No, I’m not under any brainwashing, man. I’m not fighting my other self or anything.’

Rafael cried while biting his lips.

I couldn’t find any other way.

It seemed like this kid was on the verge of crossing the bridge of no return.

‘My love, don’t cross that river.[1]*’*

“You’ll feel better soon. The bastard who’s giving you this headache… I’m going to protect you, hyung,” Rafael said.

“Protect…” I repeated.

‘Don’t protect me. Don’t do that, damn it.’

Rafael turned around while wiping his tears with one hand, and he looked like a moth flying at full speed toward the fire rather than a cool warrior about to embark on a battle of a lifetime.

I wanted to scream at him not to go, but my voice wouldn’t come out. I stretched my hand out desperately, but he wasn’t looking at me. He looked like a soldier who was prepared to sacrifice himself on the battlefield.

‘Ah, my head hurts, damn it. Why are you leaving? Your hyung is in pain here. Don’t go. Don’t cross the river of no return.’

Unfortunately, he only glanced at me once before shutting the door tightly.

There was even an audible click, which meant that he had locked me in the room. I looked around while panting and saw a Goddess’ Hand Mirror that Rafael had to have inadvertently dropped.

I picked up the hand mirror while holding my throbbing head, but the hand mirror wasn't the latest hand mirror, so I couldn't really do anything with it. I thought about transforming into Doom Ki-Young, but I had no idea when Kim Hyun-Sung would arrive.

'Ah, shit. This is bad. This is really bad. Should I still execute my I loved you, Rafael *plan?'*

I started regretting introducing the heroes of our past lives to Rafael.

I activated Mind's Eye and looked outside, but all I saw was the chosen warrior party getting ready for the upcoming battle. Lee Joo-Hyuk was quietly preparing for battle, Marian, the Miracle Priest, was praying, the archer and assassin duo were making bad jokes, and the other members had the same expression as Rafael.

Kim Hyun-Sung might spare them. I wasn't sure about Rafael, but he would probably think that it would be a waste to kill these heroes. Actually, they were all people who had come into contact with Kim Hyun-Sung before becoming heroes.

They probably weren't as close as me to Kim Hyun-Sung, but I was sure that they were Kim Hyun-Sung's comrades, at the very least.

'Let's save them at least. Rafael is a lost cause now.'

I turned to glance at Kim Hyun-Sung and found that he was already in the dungeon.

'What the… How did he get here so fast? How did you enter the dungeon so quickly?'

I was worried about his stamina because he was running nonstop, but he didn't seem tired at all. I was worried because hostility was the only emotion on his face, but… I had to trust Kim Hyun-Sung.

He had told me that Lee Joo-Hyuk was a good guy, so I had to trust him that he wouldn't abandon the precious comrades whom he had met in his past life.

The chosen warrior party had to have realized that Kim Hyun-Sung had entered the dungeon because they stood up and headed to the main stage.

- We can defeat him. I'm sure of it.

- Let's get some beer after this is over.

- *Ah*, I actually have plans…

-…

- I plan to propose to my girlfriend as soon as I get back.

'A proposal? That's a death flag, man, damn it.'

- I'm sorry.

- You don't need to apologize because we all agreed to it. I think our chances are pretty high.

- *Um*, if I die… my friends…

'Those phrases are death flags, guys. What's wrong with you? Stop… saying that.'

- I'm sure nothing will happen.

'That's a flag, so just stop talking, man.'

I was sure that they weren't aware of the death flags that they were raising because of the cliched lines they were dropping. Anyway, they were definitely worried about the upcoming battle because they were saying just about anything that came to their heads.

- He'll be here soon. Prepare for battle.

Rafael muttered to the others.

Kim Hyun-Sung focused his mana on his feet while biting his lips. They were at a distance where they could finally see each other. The atmosphere was so tense it was palpable, and I saw Kim Hyun-Sung staring at Lee Joo-Hyuk, who was standing at the helm.

'Wait, why do you look like you're actually going to kill him? I think Kim Hyun-Sung's really going to kill him… '

My jaw dropped unknowingly when I realized that our lovely regressor was determined to kill everyone here.

“Lee Joo-Hyuk, confuse him. M-Marian… be careful. Be careful, damn it! Duck! Keep your head down!” Rafael yelled.

‘I told you he was going to aim for the priest first.’

My voice seemed to have reached Marian because she immediately lowered her head.

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1. a Korean movie of the same name ☜

CHAPTER 640
DON'T LOSE (2)

The distance between the two was closed in an instant—no, it was more like Kim Hyun-Sung reached the chosen warrior party in the blink of an eye.

I was sure that none of the members of the chosen warrior party managed to track Kim Hyun-Sung's movement.

In their eyes, Kim Hyun-Sung had to have vanished and reappeared in less than a second. Kim Hyun-Sung was like a sports car running at max speed.

I was sure the members of the chosen warrior had imagined this situation many times in their minds, but it didn't mean that they were immune to surprise. Kim Hyun-Sung's goal was to take advantage of their moment of surprise.

'Calm down, damn it… Hyun-Sung, our Hyun-Sung.'

Kim Hyun-Sung focused his mana on his feet and kicked off of the to reappear behind the priest. During fights between two groups, it was only natural for the vanguards of either group to target the priests of the other group, but I wasn't convinced that Kim Hyun-Sung decided to attack the Miracle Priest with that reason in mind.

His move just now was probably instinctive rather than a move born out of rational thought.

The chosen warrior party's perfect formation was destroyed.

The surprised mage couldn't cast his spell, and the knight failed to react to Kim Hyun-Sung's movement, even though he was usually faster than others when it came to reacting to a sudden turn of events.

If it weren't for my voice, Marian's head would have been rolling on the ground at the moment. However, I wasn't sure if the Miracle Priest was aware of the fact that she had almost died just now.

I zoomed in on the shocked Lee Joo-Hyuk. A furious Rafael stood in front of him. The duo was drenched in their own sweat, and it felt like time had briefly stopped for the chosen warrior party.

However, Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't done just yet.

"Protection spell, protection spell!" Rafael yelled.

The mage cast a barrier that enveloped the party, and it managed to stop Kim Hyun-Sung's sword, making the chosen warrior party sigh in relief.

'Stop it with the bullshit, man. You really think that barrier is going to protect you?'

"Counterattack! Counterattack!" I yelled.

Unfortunately, the barrier soon crumbled. However, it seemed that the chosen warrior party knew that the barrier could only stop Kim Hyun-Sung for a moment.

It seemed like the knight heard my voice because he snapped out of his trance and moved to protect the priest. Unfortunately, the move he had made wasn't exactly the best move to make in this situation.

"Don't block! Don't block! Dodge!" I screamed.

I had no idea if the knight wanted to sacrifice himself for the priest and die with his shield split into two, but he tried to stand in front of Marian. However, it seemed that the knight heard my scream because he grabbed the priest and hurled her behind him.

Rafael and Lee Joo-Hyuk caught Marian while the knight frantically attempted to retreat. Unfortunately, he was still within Kim Hyun-Sung's attack range.

"Magic!" I shouted.

A barrier was cast, and it managed to save the party members in time.

Boom!

The barrier cracked open, and Kim Hyun-Sung continued swinging his sword.

Kim Hyun-Sung soon found an opening, and I thought the knight would lose his head, but the party's hunting dog saved him in time. He headbutted him and sent the knight staggering out of Kim Hyun-Sung's attack range.

The knight rolled pitifully on the ground. He recovered rather quickly and looked up to find that Kim Hyun-Sung was no longer there while the hunting dog was coughing up blood.

"*Cough…*"

"Holy power! Holy power!" Rafael ordered.

The knight had sustained a severe injury that extended from his shoulder to his chest, so it wasn't strange that he was dying. Marian came back to her senses and hurriedly prayed, but her healing couldn't keep up.

In the end, Marian stretched her hand out toward the sky and bit her lips.

An illusory figure shaped like an angel appeared, and the hunting dog's condition finally started to stabilize.

'A miracle.'

It was Marian's awakening skill, and it could only be used once a week. The battle had just started, but she already had to use such an overpowered skill. Kim Hyun-Sung rushed toward the hunting dog, but Rafael stood in his way with the holy sword in hand.

"*Aaaaaah!*" Rafael roared. I realized just then that he was no longer the naive Rafael I had known all this while. He was filled with spite and resentment.

Kim Hyun-Sung was also swinging his sword while biting his lips.

'He's going to die.'

There was no way Rafael could keep up with Kim Hyun-Sung. In fact, Kim Hyun-Sung's attack just now was a feint. I kept on warning them, but Kim Hyun-Sung was faster than my mouth. A barrier sprang up and protected Rafael for half a second, but it failed to stop Kim Hyun-Sung from cutting off one of Rafael's wings.

“Shit!”

The archer shot an arrow to buy time, but Kim Hyun-Sung caught it with one hand without even looking at the archer.

‘Shit, that was really cool.’

“M-Monster.”

Kim Hyun-Sung stretched his sword out toward Rafael’s head as if in response to the archer’s comment. Rafael’s seven wings protected him, but Kim Hyun-Sung started tearing apart Rafael’s wings with his hand rather than his sword.

It felt like Kim Hyun-Sung couldn’t even be bothered to use his sword against Rafael.

“*AAAH!*” Rafael roared in pain.

The knight hurriedly ran over to Rafael. The archer wanted to send another arrow in Kim Hyun-Sung’s way, but he froze upon hearing Kim Hyun-Sung’s question.

“Where is he?” asked Kim Hyun-Sung.

“…”

“Tell me where he is,” he said.

‘You guys are completely fucked. You guys are done. This is out of my hands now.’

The victor was already decided; no, this wasn’t even a fight. If I hadn’t shouted orders at them, they would have already died. The priest and the hunting dog would have been corpses by now. I was the reason they were still alive.

‘A raid party against Kim Hyun-Sung, my ass.’

The party members gulped. They were definitely scared of Kim Hyun-Sung as the latter glared at them coldly. I was sure the party members thought of Kim Hyun-Sung as a demon rather than a human being.

Kim Hyun-Sung looked like the Monarch of Darkness in my eyes rather than a Warrior of Justice, so how could he appear lesser than that in the eyes of the chosen

warrior party members?

Doom Hyun-Sung sounded pretty cool, but I didn't want to see that side of Kim Hyun-Sung at the moment. I wasn't sure whether it was because of the lightning, the atmosphere, and the situation, but I felt a shiver down my spine when I saw Kim Hyun-Sung tearing apart one of Rafael's wings with his bare hands.

I was just a spectator, but even I was afraid of Kim Hyun-Sung, so I could only imagine what the chosen warrior party members were feeling at the moment. Of course, it wasn't that difficult to deduce what Kim Hyun-Sung's expression meant.

'He's going to kill all of you guys.'

It appeared that he no longer cared about the memories he had made with them nor how much I had invested in them. Of course, he wasn't exactly *that* close to them, but…

'You said they were your comrades, Hyun-Sung. You should hear them out.'

"Shit…"

'You said the Miracle Priest helped you and that you even went out to drink with the assassin and archer duo… Didn't you say that you knew them? They didn't do anything wrong. Rafael was heartbroken, so he made a huge mistake. Emotions often lead people to make the wrong decisions, man. You shouldn't abandon them so easily.'

"Don't do this, man…" I mumbled.

'Do you not know how difficult it was to raise them by myself? I know you don't want to kill them.'

I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung missed them dearly as well.

He looked like he was kind of enjoying himself whenever he talked about the heroes. He even said that he wasn't planning on making new connections in this life, but wasn't it a clear indication that he still had some feelings for these guys because he had been supporting them from the dark?

However, I didn't see that kind of yearning from him right now.

Hatred and anger were the only emotions I could see in him at the moment.

'Looks like he's really going to kill them.'

I knew without even asking him. Rafael and the members of the chosen warrior party would definitely die unless I go out there and stop him.

I tried to open the door while stumbling, but it wouldn't budge.

Meanwhile, Kim Hyun-Sung had already pointed his sword at the chosen warrior party.

'Regardless of the result… I should try to save them.'

I started thinking about how I was going to save them, but for now, I had to buy time until I figured out a way to open this door. I sent him a message after thinking that it would be best to contact him directly, but Kim Hyun-Sung had to have left his hand mirror in his office because he wasn't responding to me.

And that was when I heard knocking on the door…

'Who is it?'

"Sub Guild Master?"

'Oh my, it's our Lian! Our Lian did it!'

I had no idea how Park Lian managed to get away, but she had to have made sure to only make a move once the chosen warrior party was no longer keeping an eye on her.

I felt like screaming out of joy upon hearing her voice.

"I'm trying to… find a way to open the door. Please wait a moment…" Park Lian said.

"Okay."

I just had to get out of this room, and I would be able to stop them from fighting each other to the death. I tapped my thigh out of nervousness, but it felt like the door wouldn't open anytime soon.

Meanwhile, Kim Hyun-Sung and the chosen warrior party stared at each other amidst the tense atmosphere that was so thick it was palpable.

'First of all, I'm going to try and save them.'

It would be difficult, and there was no guarantee that I would succeed. However, it wouldn't be that difficult for me to buy them time.

'Marian's awakening skill is no longer available… '

The mage could no longer cast his signature protection spell, as he could only cast it three times a day. Of course, the mage still had many spells up his sleeves, but he wasn't really in the position to channel any of his spells.

'I have to cast a protection spell on them.'

It would be weak, but it would be enough to save their lives. The barrier I could cast was basically as thin as a piece of paper in Kim Hyun-Sung's eyes, but it was enough to give the party members enough time to react.

I just had to buy them enough time to recover.

The Miracle Priest was slightly exhausted, and the hunting dog seemed capable of moving now while the other party members were in good condition. If the priest had died earlier, they would have had zero chance against Kim Hyun-Sung.

Fortunately, the priest was still alive, and there was no way the chosen warrior party would crumble that easily against just about anyone else. Rafael could still fight as well, so I was confident that they could hold out until I was out of this room.

If I could control the chosen warrior party like how I could control the tactical Kim Hyun-Sung…

'I can do it.'

Thirty minutes? Was it too optimistic? How about ten minutes?

It'd be nice if I managed to get out of here in ten minutes…

While my head was full of many different thoughts, I started talking as usual.

They didn't have the luxury of time, so I had to give them instructions as fast as possible.

"Focus on my voice," I instructed.

"…"

I had no idea what was going to happen, and…

"I'll be giving orders starting now," I told them.

…I truly didn't expect that I would one day become the leader of a raid party against Kim Hyun-Sung.

CHAPTER 641
DON'T LOSE (3)

'I can do it. I can do it. I can do it.'

I unknowingly repeated my words as if I were recording an advertisement. I was telling myself that I could do it because I was aware that what I was about to do was extremely reckless. I didn't think that I was *that* convincing, and it wasn't because I had no faith in Rafael's party.

Of course, I was aware of the party members' abilities. However, the only reason I thought this was possible in the first place was that I was extremely familiar with Kim Hyun-Sung. His nature, attack patterns, and his minor habits would help me immensely.

I was completely aware of just how much power he could unleash, how big was his mana and stamina reservoir, what he could do on the battlefield, what he could do in skirmishes, and what he could do to affect the entire battlefield.

Our lovely regressor was a training maniac, but I was confident that he had never done an in-depth analysis of himself.

I grabbed my throbbing head.

'I can do it.'

Rafael's party was strong. They were still a bit rough, but…

'I can perfect them.'

Winning was impossible, but they should be able to stand their ground.

"Don't make it obvious that you can hear my voice. Pretend like you don't know anything, and obviously, don't reply to me," I instructed.

'…'

“We have to drag this out for as long as possible. The deciding factor here is making sure that there are three protection-type spells ready to be cast at any time. Think of those spells as the party’s lifeline. Don’t use it recklessly and without my permission. Don’t use it even if it looks like the situation calls for it. You have to wait for my command to use it,” I explained.

-…

“I don’t want the mage to channel any other spells beforehand aside from those three protection spells. Whenever those spells are on cooldown, we’ll use Rafael’s gray light until they go off cooldown.

”The cycle is like this: use up the three protection spells and stall for time until you’re forced to use Rafael’s gray light to protect yourselves.

”When the three protection spells go off cooldown, stall for time once more until Rafael’s gray light goes off cooldown. I’ll let you know when to cast spells, so don’t do anything unless I tell you to do it,” I instructed.

- Where are you?

“Once the battle starts, gather in one place. You don’t have to stick to each other so closely, but make sure that you’re within the priest’s buff range. I’m sure you know better than me that your stats can’t possibly keep up with Kim Hyun-Sung’s stats.

“In other words, you must be buffed at all times. Otherwise, you won’t be able to carry out my orders. Additionally, don’t get too worried if your eyes can’t track him. I’ll track him myself. Just think of me as a pair of eyes.

“Kim Hyun-Sung is currently at 12 o’clock. I know I’m talking kind of fast, but I trust that all of you can keep up with me. I’ll provide detailed instructions as soon as the battle starts.

-…

“Most importantly, you’re going to die if you make even the smallest mistakes, so don’t make any mistakes,” I warned them.

-…

“Archer, prepare your arrow. Don’t panic and fire it like you did earlier. Aim properly this time. Rafael, I want you to get out while abandoning one wing… If you can’t do it, then sacrifice two wings. We’ll provide support, so get out as soon as possible,” I instructed.

-…

“Fire,” I ordered.

The archer shot an arrow at my order, and Kim Hyun-Sung immediately responded by raising his sword, but…

“Knight, move forward while holding up your shield. Priest, cast a recovery spell first before casting a buff on the knight. Mage, I want you to do the same,” I instructed.

The heavily-armed knight charged while holding up a large shield.

The priest seemed doubtful about my order, but her doubt turned into confusion when she saw the knight collapsing to the floor while bleeding. However, the knight was even more confused than her when he started recovering as soon as he took damage.

‘Not bad.’

I was a bit worried because the knight’s stat build wasn’t similar to Park Deok-Gu, who had put all of his points into defense-related stats. However, it seemed that he was capable of taking one hit from Kim Hyun-Sung.

To be honest, the knight was already doing his best by protecting his vital points to make sure that Kim Hyun-Sung wouldn’t kill him instantly. Meanwhile, Rafael spread his wings and was doing his best to escape Kim Hyun-Sung.

Kim Hyun-Sung seemed to be confused about what just happened.

“Gray light.”

A powerful gray light enveloped the party and pushed Kim Hyun-Sung away, but there was no way a burst of gray light could keep Kim Hyun-Sung at bay any longer than a second.

The entire party had four lifelines, but it didn't mean that they could take on four attacks from Kim Hyun-Sung. Their lifelines were more like get-out-of-jail-free cards, and I was sure that they were aware of that as well.

Anyway, the chosen warrior party reorganized their formation.

'Her protection spells are channeled and ready.'

The true fight was about to begin.

"Rafael, you'll stay in the center. The hunting dog will stay at the front," I ordered.

I decided to use the hunting dog rather than Rafael because the hunting dog was more balanced than Rafael. The hunting dog was weaker than Rafael, but Rafael was so strong that the party's overall balance would tilt to offense rather than defense, which Kim Hyun-Sung could easily take advantage of to win.

It seemed that Rafael was more quick-witted than I thought because he thrust his sword into the ground.

'Gray zone.'

It was a skill that buffed allies and debuffed enemies as long as they were within the zone. Of course, Rafael's debuff wouldn't affect Kim Hyun-Sung that much, but our goal here was to buff the entire party's overall defense and stats.

There was a clear difference between working in a party and by yourself.

An individual would definitely not be able to defeat an extremely powerful monster, but a great party could achieve the impossible through organized team play, balancing the party's overall prowess, coordinated actions, and accurate judgment.

"Mr. Lee Joo-Hyuk, do what you usually do, but I want you to only make a move when I tell you to do so," I told him.

I didn't have multiple screens to use to observe the battle from all angles, but I poured as much mana as I could into the telescope to examine Kim Hyun-Sung, I analyzed which part of his body he was empowering using mana, which muscles he was using more to perform certain moves, and his overall movement pattern.

The tactical hunting dog wasn't as efficient and as strong as him, but…

'The hunting dog just needs to hold him back.'

It was impossible to injure Kim Hyun-Sung.

"Don't hold back," I added.

The hunting dog's job was to hold Kim Hyun-Sung back, even if it meant losing his life.

The hunting dog lacked speed, strength, and mana. To make matters worse, the tactical hunting dog could only get to Kim Hyun-Sung's location one step later, and I was sure that the tactical hunting dog was frustrated about that fact.

Meanwhile, Kim Hyun-Sung definitely thought that the hunting dog was an off-tank because of the latter's insistence on attracting his aggro.

"Left," I called out.

- *Haa…*

"Watch your head."

- *Haa, haa…*

"Focus mana on feet. He's going to vanish. Turn to the right," I said.

- *Haa, haa…*

"Keep following him. If you get there too late, everyone will die. Don't give him time to gather mana into his arms. Stick to him like glue, or everyone will die. A simple graze from his sword will send everyone's heads flying into the air, so don't even let him swing his sword toward the other party members.

"I just want you to kite him so that he wouldn't have any time to gather mana on his sword. That way, the others won't have any issues dodging his attacks," I explained.

- *Haa, haa, haa…*

'I think this guy is about to pass out.'

The hunting dog couldn't possibly keep up with Kim Hyun-Sung, and it seemed that Kim Hyun-Sung was aware of that fact as well.

'He's too smart during fights.'

He was aware of the hunting dog's role, and it had to be the reason he was avoiding any engagements with the hunting dog. His stats were superior compared to the hunting dog, but he knew that the hunting dog was just trying to exhaust him, so he decided to avoid the hunting dog altogether.

He knew that he would have issues fighting the party once the hunting dog fulfilled his goal. I thought that he had exhausted quite a bit of mana and stamina because he made a beeline for the dungeon immediately after hearing the news.

However, it didn't seem like it. Of course, I was sure that he was a bit exhausted, but he obviously still had no issues fighting Rafael's party.

'His stamina increased a lot.'

It seemed that the tactical Kim Hyun-Sung was insecure about his stamina, and I was sure that it all started when he barely had any stamina left to use to confront me during the 27th Legion Kidnapping Incident.

He probably prioritized increasing his stamina since then.

'This is bad.'

The hunting dog was on the verge of collapsing to the ground despite the party members' support. The hunting dog was still moving according to instructions, but he had become too slow.

I told him just what kind of attacks he should unleash, but he couldn't unleash them due to his lack of stamina.

'It's only been 1 minute and 40 seconds. Wait, maybe it has been two minutes… '

He somehow managed to last for two minutes, but it was clear that the party would only last a few minutes against Kim Hyun-Sung. I had to protect the hunting dog

using the mage's protection spells, which were the party's lifelines.

Fortunately, Rafael was still doing fine as the pillar of the party. It was important for me to make sure that the hunting dog would last because the party's balance would be ruined once Rafael joined the fray.

Someone would definitely die as well.

'I think we're in big trouble… really big trouble.'

I glanced at the large door, but it looked like Park Lian had left to look for her daggers to open the door.

'Hyun-Sung… Damn it, Hyun-Sung.'

One thing I found kind of strange was that Kim Hyun-Sung hadn't been doing much. I couldn't help but think that the reason the party was still intact even now was that he wasn't attacking rather than me being effective at maintaining the party.

I wasn't sure if I was right, but he looked like he was analyzing Rafael's party.

'You haven't caught on, have you, Hyun-Sung?'

I couldn't help but think that way because Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't an idiot.

He was probably suspicious of the fact that Marian managed to dodge his attack earlier.

The pests he thought he could easily rip to shreds were surprisingly fighting back. He probably thought that the party was better organized than he imagined, and there was a chance he was even imagining things that he didn't want to think about.

'Are these bastards receiving orders from Mr. Ki-Young?'

It was a reasonable assumption because the way they moved looked as if they were being tested to see how far they could last against Kim Hyun-Sung. It was like he was going through each and every detail to see if his assumption was correct. I knew Kim Hyun-Sung pretty well, but he knew me pretty well as well.

He was aware of how I give orders to parties and how I make the individual

members of a party move according to my instructions.

As expected, Kim Hyun-Sung's expression turned serious. I thought perhaps he understood that I didn't want him to kill these guys, but it was just wishful thinking.

'Ah… '

Meanwhile, Rafael looked happy.

'You're not winning, man. You can lose your head at any moment, so why are you smiling like that?'

Rafael was probably thinking that I had finally acknowledged him as an adventurer.

Obviously, his grin annoyed Kim Hyun-Sung.

If I were truly ordering the party members, it had to be because the chosen warrior party had brainwashed me. Kim Hyun-Sung probably thought that the party members had brainwashed me or had employed some kind of method to pressure me mentally.

He was probably worried that I was being forced to do something that I didn't want to do or some other cliche. My face turned grim, along with Kim Hyun-Sung's face.

Soon, our lovely regressor glared at Rafael's party.

- I'll kill you.

'You were going to kill them from the start.'

- I'll make you regret living… you scummy bastards.

'No, don't do that. Don't say lines that a villain would say. We're on the side of justice. You know that, right?'

"Don't get close to him. Stay away! You'll die if you move. If you move—" I yelled.

Oh, no, it seemed that one of them was going to die.

- *Ah!*

There was a miserable scream as the arms of one of the duos went flying into the air.

'I don't know anymore.'

I saw one of them rolling on the ground while screaming in pain.

- *Ahh! Aaaaaack!!*

It seemed that the guy who said he would propose to his girlfriend once he was back home was about to die. No, even if he somehow survived this ordeal, he wouldn't be able to get on his knees because Kim Hyun-Sung had just severed one of his legs.

- *Argh!*

'I-I loved you, Rafael. Damn it.'

I was about to witness the death of the demon-contracting bastards who had kidnapped the light of the continent.

"Hang in there. Hang in there, Hyun-Sung… Don't lose!"

CHAPTER 642
CRAZY CROW (1)

The unyielding but fallen chosen warrior stood in front of Kim Hyung-Sung and his party members, who had fallen into depravity. I shook my head when I saw him threaten Kim Hyun-Sung using the holy sword—no, Lucifer's magic sword.

I wasn't sure if the regressor could overcome this crisis, but his face told me the severity of the situation.

'Dirty dogs of Lucifer… '

I felt a shiver down my spine upon seeing the demon-contracting bastards threaten the peaceful continent. I was nervous about many things. Kim Hyun-Sung's overall stats were high, but he had to be exhausted because he rushed here without any preparations.

I really wanted to go out there and punish those bastards using the sword of light, but I couldn't do it because I was locked in here, which frustrated me to no end

'Open up.'

I knocked furiously on the large door, but nothing happened.

'I have no choice but to trust him. No, I trust Hyun-Sung.'

"He can do it."

Kim Hyun-Sung had overcome many crises before, so he could definitely overcome this crisis. Lucifer's lapdogs started retreating before the lovely regressor's fury, who was convinced that his best friend had been brainwashed.

I was sure that these demon contractors were retreating out of instinct when the demonic energy inside them stirred up in the face of Kim Hyun-Sung's dazzling and powerful energy reminiscent of a sunset.

“Hang in there. Don’t lose, Hyun-Sung.”

I was sure my voice would give him strength. Unfortunately, my voice couldn’t reach him…

- W-What should we do next, hyung?

“…”

- What should we… do next…

“…”

I had to be ruthless and cut them off, but the darkness they had implanted in me reacted strongly to their voices.

- Please answer, hyung. G-Give us orders.

“…”

- You’re okay, right, hyung? You’re doing fine… right? You’re not unconscious, are you?

Rafael started to feel more and more anxious. My head throbbed, and I started tapping my thigh while thinking of what I should do to wrap this up.

‘Should I just say that I got brainwashed?’

I was sure Kim Hyun-Sung thought that way, so it would be a reasonable excuse. I had to think fast, as Kim Hyun-Sung would soon find his way to this room.

I looked in the mirror and saw that I didn’t look so good.

I thought it would be great to have traces of self-harm[1], but I had to be sure that it would be effective. Otherwise, I wouldn’t do it. I didn’t really want to experience pain without gaining anything in return.

I was confident that Kim Hyun-Sung would acknowledge the pain I had been through, even if I didn’t have any bruises.

'Actually, would it be better to have a few wounds?'

While I was having many different thoughts, the guy who looked like a nugget after Kim Hyun-Sung severed his limbs was rolling on the ground in pain. It seemed that Kim Hyun-Sung no longer deemed him a threat as he slowly walked past the nugget.

I wasn't sure if he wanted the nugget to have a slow and painful death, but one thing was for sure—the light had punished him.

I felt kind of being to see Rafael biting his lips, but the balance was no longer there, and it was impossible to restore it.

To make matters worse…

'Ah, I'm scared.'

Kim Hyun-Sung looked really scary.

- Hyung, hyung! Hyung!

There was a loud explosion as Kim Hyun-Sung slammed Rafael's face into a wall.

Rafael spread his wings and retreated back, but he still got injured.

Honestly, the mental injury that he had sustained seemed heavier than the physical injuries he had sustained. He was definitely thinking of the reason why I suddenly stopped talking or…

'Did he hear me earlier?'

I wasn't sure if he heard me earlier, but what I said earlier about how I didn't want Kim Hyun-Sung to lose had to have a massive effect on his mind. He was thinking of the possibility that I was cutting ties with him.

I was kind of worried, but it seemed that Rafael had reached a different conclusion.

- What did you do?! What did you do to hyung? Hyung…

-…

- It can't be. It can't…

'I'm really sorry. I didn't want to do it, but I have to. Everyone has cut their losses, so it's meaningless for me to keep on investing when there's no one available to hold my bags for me.'

- There's no way… that he would abandon me… I'm sure… something is wrong. Yeah, I'm sure you… you did something to him.

'It's completely reasonable to think that way. There isn't any betrayal if he doesn't believe that I had betrayed him.'

- Hyung wouldn't abandon… *Ahhhh!!*

Boom!

Rafael was starting to lose it. It was only a matter of time before the party members were annihilated. The hunting dog still looked determined, and he rushed at Kim Hyun-Sung while biting his lips.

I thought his head was going to get cut off immediately, but he managed to put up a good fight, which surprised me. He looked like he was squeezing out even the final vestiges of his strength as he started moving like he did earlier.

I didn't give him any orders, but it seemed that everyone was still aware of their roles.

- Are you going to just sit there?

The hunting dog's line was really cheesy, even though he looked like a bloody rag.

- Are you going to just sit there and let things end like this?

'Stop it, guys… '

- Get up. Get up, Rafael! Don't disappoint me. Don't disappoint us! We followed you because we trusted you.

I understood their feelings, but I was cringing.

- You started this with your own hands. You have to see this through. Didn't you want to fight for the people you want to protect, for the continent, and to pay for the sins you've committed? I remember what you said, Rafael, and I followed you when I saw the look in your eyes.

-…

- Stay strong. I'm sure you can do it. I'm sure—

The hunting dog's surprisingly old-school feelings made me jump out of my seat, but someone was responding to it. It'd be strange not to react to it when a sword pierced the hunting dog's chest.

I was honestly kind of worried about Kim Hyun-Sung. The current situation was bad, but wasn't it a bit too harsh for him to kill his comrades from his past life with his own hands? I also wanted to know his thoughts about the fact that the same comrade was supporting Rafael.

- Fight for yourself. Don't lose, Rafael… Don't… lose…

The hunting dog collapsed with blood flowing out of his mouth. His breathing was weak; he was still alive, but it was undeniable that he was about to die.

- N-No, no!

Rafael exclaimed.

Marian hurriedly cast a healing spell on the hunting dog.

- Don't lose. Don't lose. Don't back down.

- *Ahhh…*

- Do you remember? You told me… we could do it. You told me that when we first met. I'm sure you can do it, Mr. Rafael…

- Marian, Marian!

The Miracle Priest finally exhausted all of her holy power, and she collapsed to the floor.

Rafael looked around and cried as if the sight before him was a lie.

His comrades were dying.

- G-Give me strength.

-…

- If there's a reason you chose me, give me strength!

- You were never chosen in the first place.

- Hyung told me that there was a reason I was chosen, s-so give me strength! Give me the power to protect my comrades and hyung! You useless piece of metal! Please… I beg you. Please… I'll do whatever you want.

It was about time for something to happen. It was cliche for the warrior of justice to be acknowledged by the holy sword and receive power from it during a critical moment, but Rafael was really a chosen warrior.

I clicked my tongue…

Booooooooom.

A stream of gray light abruptly flowed out of Rafael.

'Wait, this shouldn't be happening. What's going on?'

The radiant gray light that I couldn't even describe properly felt glorious.

Rafael's injuries started to recover—no, his injuries actually vanished as if he had never sustained any injuries. Of course, the gray light enveloped those on the ground. The dying hunting dog stabilized, and Marian's pallid face returned to normal.

'What the… '

I just sold my coins and cut my losses, so what was this?

'I can still buy more coins, right?'

Kim Hyun-Sung's expression turned grim.

Rafael was unleashing a power that…

'Doesn't make sense. His power doesn't make sense.'

The magic sword—no, the holy sword had chosen him, but the strength Rafael was displaying at the moment wasn't something an ordinary human could possess. The power of the gray light had exceeded Kim Hyun-Sung's power.

Of course, I didn't think that our lovely regressor would lose to Rafael, but Rafael's current power was really weird.

However, I had an idea where that power was coming from.

"Lucifer."

Rafael had to have signed a contract with Lucifer.

A contract was the minimum requirement for him to…

'Ha.'

I bit my lips as I thought about many things.

'How?'

"Why the hell…"

'Why did you invest in this coin?'

Everyone else had cut their losses and had let go of the coin, so I couldn't help but question why Lucifer had decided to step in and catch falling knives.

Just what made her go all-in rather than cut her losses?

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1. Please don't harm yourself guys, please seek help ☜

CHAPTER 643
CRAZY CROW (2)

'What are you up to?'

"…"

'Can you hear me? What's your goal?'

Lucifer didn't respond to me. It made sense because she wouldn't have suddenly done something like this if she had any plans of letting me know about what she was about to do. Wait, now that I thought about it.

'I don't think this happened all of a sudden… ''

There was a possibility that this was Lucifer's goal all this while. At this point, I wasn't actually sure what she was after, but this had to be her goal, or it wouldn't make sense for her to go this far.

In retrospect, there were many suspicious points. It all started with Rafael becoming the chosen warrior up until now. I had ignored all those points, but I couldn't just ignore the fact that Lucifer had invested in something like this.

'It's going opposite to the moon, but she still decided to invest in it.'

I wouldn't have found it strange if Benigoa were in Lucifer's shoes, but Lucifer was the one who had made such a strange decision rather than Benigoa. I would have just accepted the outcome if there were even the slightest sign of the coins going to the moon, but…

'That's not the case… '

Moreover, Lucifer was obviously serious. She went deep rather than just dabbling her feet in the murky waters. My jaw dropped to the ground upon seeing the dazzling gray light that poured down on Rafael like a waterfall.

I was starting to get worried for Kim Hyun-Sung.

'This is seriously ridiculous.'

Kim Hyun-Sung infused an immense amount of mana into his sword and charged at Rafael, but Rafael blocked Kim Hyun-Sung's sword using the gray light. There was a grotesque noise as one of Rafael's wings was severed, but…

'It recovered right away.'

Lucifer had truly decided to go all-out, and it was evidenced by how Rafael's wings recovered to normal while covered in gray light. I didn't think that even a Mythical weapon could unleash that much power.

In other words, someone had definitely sponsored Rafael.

- I can protect them with this power…

'That's not your power.'

In some way, it was similar to when Belial poured his mana into me, but I was sure that Rafael's current condition was worse than my condition at the time.

In addition to a Mythic-rank sword, Rafael was currently wielding the power of a demon stronger than Belial. Obviously, Rafael would be able to maximize that power, as my body was too weak to take full advantage of Belial's mana.

Rafael was talented as well. Actually, he could be considered a genius, and he managed to get this far with his own power.

I wasn't sure whether he was compatible with Lucifer or if there would be any side effects, but Rafael looked perfect at the moment.

Rafael's action of swinging his sword alone made the surroundings crumble apart. He went all in on his advanced magic operation knowledge, and his investment in magic control had finally paid off as well.

His low Endurance and Stamina weren't issues anymore, as he was completely enveloped in the gray light.

I thought Lucifer wanted to completely get rid of Kim Hyun-Sung, but I immediately shook my head.

'No, that can't be. She really wants Kim Hyun-Sung.'

Kim Hyun-Sung didn't know what was happening with the gods up there, and he still hadn't chosen which side he was going to join, so there wasn't a reason for Lucifer to do something ridiculous when she could recruit Kim Hyun-Sung. Moreover…

'I'm sure she doesn't want to turn me into her enemy as well.'

If she was thinking about getting rid of Kim Hyun-Sung and helping Rafael take over his spot, I could confidently tell her that it was the wrong move. Rafael could never replace Kim Hyun-Sung, even with Lucifer's full support.

I suddenly got scared, so I started banging on the door, but I wasn't getting any responses from Park Lian.

Meanwhile, Kim Hyun-Sung and Rafael were still fighting, and it only took a few minutes for the large clearing to turn into a ruin.

The powerful gray light targeted Kim Hyun-Sung, and Kim Hyun-Sung continued swinging his sword while glaring at Rafael with a cold gaze.

Rafael's wounds kept on healing despite the injuries that Kim Hyun-Sung was inflicting on him

"What are the guys upstairs doing? Why are they not doing anything? Are they trying to say Rafael's current prowess wasn't the result of Lucifer's decision to support Rafael?"

Rafael had gotten so strong that Lucifer had definitely stepped foot on the continent. It wouldn't make sense otherwise.

[An average-ranked Forced Quest has been activated.]

[Lee Ki-Young, my faithful follower… L-Lee Ki-Young! (0/1)]

'I knew Lucifer was behind this. All right, damn it… I'm sure the gods aren't that incompetent that they wouldn't notice.'

[An average-ranked Forced Quest has been activated.]

[T-The inspection team is on their way… right now. W-What should I do? Are you still preparing for the trial? For now, the telescope… the telescope. (0/1)]

'…'

[This is really bad, Lee Ki-Young… The telescope… hurry… (0/1)]

'Damn it. I'm an idiot for relying on you. Do you really think they're coming because of the trial and to question you? Can you not see what's going on here?'

[An average-ranked Forced Quest has been activated.]

[*A-Ah!* W-What? What's going on? (0/1)]

'You still haven't caught on? Shit.'

[H-Hold on. I-I'll try to… I'll try to fix it. Hold on… (0/1)]

[The average-ranked Forced Quest has been canceled due to an unknown reason.]

"She really is going all out on this. Damn it."

Lucifer had just stopped Benigoa from interfering.

I criticized the beings above for being idiots, but I didn't actually think that they were idiots. I didn't really expect that much from them, and Lucifer's plan was just too discreet, which was proven by how the beings above noticed it a step too late.

'So she's been planning this behind the scenes. Shit… '

The scene of Lucifer sitting in a chair and observing what was going on with pure, childlike joy popped into my mind.

'I think the gods up above are still planning their next move… Ha.'

I couldn't help but laugh at the thought of her making provoking remarks and ridiculing me. I wasn't actually sure of her exact plan, but she probably had no idea that we were extremely hostile to demons. If she were aware of that, however, then

she was probably confident that her coin could withstand the negative market sentiment.

'How much time do I have left?'

Lucifer couldn't stop me from contacting the heavens for the next million years, and the gods stronger than Benigoa would soon arrive. This was Lucifer's second visit, so I was sure the beings up above were finally going to take this seriously.

Soon, Lucifer would no longer have a reason to stop Benigoa from creating more quests, but the question was when it would happen and if it was going to align with the golden time.

Anyway, I had to do something as well.

'I'm getting anxious… What is Park Lian doing?'

Boom!

Just in time, a deafening explosion echoed, and Park Lian appeared. She was covered in sweat, and I really wanted to compliment her for a job well done, but I didn't have the luxury to do that. I also noticed Kim Hyun-Sung's increasingly grim expression.

"*Haa… haa…* I-I'm sorry I'm late. S-Sub Guild Master… a-are you okay? Are you hurt anywhere… You don't look so good…" Park Lian asked.

"Please help me," I requested.

"I'll help you get out of here right now," she said.

"No, there's a place we need to go. Before that… *ah…"* I told her.

'My eyes… Shit, my head.'

"I think it's best if you rest for now…" she suggested.

"No, let's go. It's urgent," I declined.

"But…"

“We have to go!” I shouted.

“Okay.”

When I took a step, an excruciating pain struck me. It was so painful that I wanted to fall to the ground and start rolling just to withstand it. Unfortunately, I had to continue walking, and it was a good thing that Park Lian was here to support me.

I looked up and saw the raging battle.

Kim Hyun-Sung’s expression had become beyond cold.

Blood flowed down his lips as he was biting them, and there was blood on his hand that gripped the sword.

Rafael would get injured whenever he swung his sword, but the gray light immediately patched him up.

Kim Hyun-Sung seemed fine so far, but I was really starting to get worried about his stamina.

- I will never forgive you. Never!

‘Stop talking bullshit, you crazy bastard.’

-…

- Never!

It was an understatement to say that the raging battle was a violent one. Kim Hyun-Sung was still unscathed, but anyone could deduce that he was feeling the pressure. He was anxious and angry, and his breathing had gotten a bit unstable.

At this point, it seemed like Kim Hyun-Sung was fighting a fragment of Lucifer rather than Rafael.

‘Is there a limit? Is it going to run out?’

I was aware that Lucifer was extremely powerful, but I couldn’t help but doubt if this investment was really worth it.

Anyway, the battle continued. Rafael would get hurt and recover, and he would then use the gray light to kite Kim Hyun-Sung, hoping for an opening to appear, which he could take advantage of to deal massive damage.

Meanwhile, Kim Hyun-Sung was busy swinging his sword. The only difference between the two was that it felt like Rafael had infinite mana while Kim Hyun-Sung had a finite mana bar.

I wanted to help him somehow, but I had no idea how to go about that.

I could control the tactical Kim Hyun-Sung, but it wouldn't work here, as Kim Hyun-Sung was feeling the pressure.

I thought stopping the fight was the first thing I needed to do, so I immediately started talking into the hand mirror.

"Stop it, Mr. Rafael. You're being controlled right now. Stop fighting. There's a misunderstanding—"

I immediately realized that I had made the wrong decision.

- No, you're the one who's being controlled. Just watch. I'm going to kill this bastard and turn you back to normal. He won't make you suffer any longer. You'll no longer… get a headache…

'Huh?'

- Your memories…

'Stop it, you crazy bastard. You said you wouldn't tell anyone.'

- Your memories…

'You piece of shit… Stop! Stop! Stooop!'

- You'll no longer lose your memories.

'Bas—'

- What?

‘…’

It felt as if time had stopped moving, and it looked like I wasn’t the only one who felt that way because the intense battle immediately came to a lull. Kim Hyun-Sung frowned as if he were hearing things.

- What did you say just now?

- I said he’ll no longer lose his memories. Don’t you dare tell me that you have no idea, Kim Hyun-Sung! You scum!

- What… What did you just say…

- It’s your fault… It’s your fault that he’s losing his memorieeeees!

Kim Hyun-Sung’s expression turned complicated.

It was then that I finally discovered Lucifer’s true goal and the reason she had decided to invest in Rafael.

‘Corruption.’

“…”

“…”

“Lucifer…” I mumbled.

The crazy crow’s goal was probably the advent of Doom Hyun-Sung.

CHAPTER 644
CRAZY CROW (3)

Kim Hyun-Sung's face was soon enveloped by anxiety. Their swords still clashed, but it was clear that Kim Hyun-Sung was losing focus, as he seemed to be thinking about something. Obviously, I knew what he was thinking.

He was probably thinking about the shocking information he heard just now. It would be nice if he told himself to focus and convince himself that what he had just heard was nonsense, but he was still spacing out.

He was definitely having flashbacks of my strange behavior, such as my random headaches, how I would sometimes space out as if I had gone to another world, and how I would forget about things that had just happened.

He had asked Jo Hye-Jin to check up on me, as he had his suspicions. He was actually the first one to assume things and realize that there might be something wrong with me.

'Shit… shit… '

He was clearly thinking that either Jo Hye-Jin had reported false information to him or I had been hiding it from him. It didn't take long for him to frown, and his eyes were filled with endless despair.

'Why does he look so disheartened?'

-…

'Hyun-Sung, come back to your senses. I'm fine, so just focus. You're not trying to lock yourself up in your subconscious again, are you? You know you're not allowed to feel tired, right?'

- I'm going to save hyung. I'm going to save him from your dirty grasp.

'Shut up, man.'

- You don’t know anything… You know… nothing!

‘Just shut up already.’

Kim Hyun-Sung’s mental health was plummeting, and it affected his performance. It looked like he couldn’t make a sound judgment anymore. He was still moving, but his attacks had become erratic.

I couldn’t help but think that the reveal had shocked him a bit too much. Jo Hye-Jin had cried when I used the memory loss card on her, so it wasn’t strange that Kim Hyun-Sung’s reaction was worse than hers, considering our relationship.

I was his precious friend, a comrade carrying his burdens with him, and his brother spanning two lifetimes. He couldn’t rely on anyone else other than me. For the sake of staying in the regressor’s arms, I caused all sorts of trivial incidents.

That was why I couldn’t help but get worried about many things.

- No way…

‘You’re right, there’s no way that’s true. You’re right, Hyun-Sung.’

- No way. That can’t be true.

‘Yeah, it’s all bullshit. He’s just a liar. He seems to be kind of an oddball, so don’t even believe his ridiculous remarks.’

- That’s… not possible.

‘Yeah, of course, it’s impossible. You know that better than anyone, and he’s being controlled by Lucifer right now, so don’t even bother listening to him. You know everything he’s saying is a lie, right?’

- You’re… lying.

‘That’s right. It’s a lie.’

However, the problem was that he didn’t think it was a lie.

Boom!

Kim Hyun-Sung was sent flying into a wall. Breathing heavily, I was worried that Rafael's determination to beat Kim Hyun-Sung no matter what was going to hurt our regressor, but I didn't think there was anything seriously wrong with him physically.

I was convinced that Lucifer's goal was Doom Hyun-Sung, so I was sure she wouldn't stand by and watch him get hurt. After all, one's mental health could cause more changes than one's physical condition.

I got worried that he would enter his subconscious world again. If that really was her plan, then the current scene was certainly what she had been wanting to achieve. She wanted Rafael to corner Kim Hyun-Sung with words until the latter couldn't take it anymore.

I couldn't help but nod at my assumption when I saw Kim Hyun-Sung's grim look.

'That wicked crow bitch… Shit, shit.'

I didn't have enough evidence to support my words, but as time passed, her goal became clearer to me. Lucifer probably thought that exhausting Kim Hyun-Sung mentally was her first task, and she was doing a great job.

Kim Hyun-Sung's nature had always been closer to light. To be exact, he was walking his own path, but he always had the guild near him. Kim Hyun-Sung's nature—Kind-hearted Mediator— didn't allow even the smallest opening for the demons to slip through.

The process of breaking down his strong mental wall so that he could obtain the corruption keyword was going along smoothly.

It would be easier to understand if I just said that the plan was to taint his clean soul. The aura that was slowly encroaching on the puzzled Kim Hyun-Sung proved that my assumption was correct.

The next step was to tempt him to accept new power.

It was a typical method that dirty demons often employed to tempt innocent humans.

At this point, Kim Hyun-Sung could definitely hear Lucifer's voice. She was probably telling him that she could give him anything he wanted.

If he wanted power, she could give it to him, and if he wanted to get someone's memories back, she could do that as well.

I didn't know exactly what she was telling him, but I figured that the voice I couldn't hear was telling him typical, cliched phrases.

Lucifer could be telling Kim Hyun-Sung to deny the light because of the unreasonable fate that the light had dealt to Lee Ki-Young despite his devotion to the gods. If I were Lucifer, I would have told Kim Hyun-Sung to deny Benigoa.

'Ha, shit.'

I got curious about how Doom Hyun-Sung—the Monarch of Darkness—would look like, but that was out of the question.

'It's unacceptable.'

Kim Hyun-Sung could become stronger even without Lucifer's power.

'The crow is impure.'

It would be a good choice in the short term, but it wasn't a great decision for the long term. Cumbersome decorations on one's carefully polished jewelry were unnecessary, and I was sure Kim Hyun-Sung knew that very well. Borrowing power from somewhere would help him get out of the immediate crisis, but it wouldn't help him later.

'I'm right, aren't I? You're not going to sign a contract with her or anything, right? You don't even like demons.'

I knew Lucifer wasn't just going to appear in her demon form, and there was no way that Kim Hyun-Sung—who had experienced all kinds of hardships—would unhesitantly grab the hands of a savior from out of nowhere.

'You're not going to sign a contract, right? Your unique habit did change… but you're still the Kind-hearted Mediator. It's not like the world is crumbling down, so why would you grab the hands of this unknown savior?'

And that was when Kim Hyun-Sung bit his lips…

'Hyun-Sung.'

There was no conviction in his hesitant gaze.

'This crazy crow bitch. If she doesn't stop now, I won't care about the contract or whatever anymore… '

[No, this will help you as well, Commander Lee Ki-Young.]

'What?'

[Of course, my personal greed is included, but this path is for both of you.]

'I don't need it.'

[No, you're going to need it. You'll thank me. I'm sure of it. And you'll come with him in the end, isn't that right?]

Afterward, I didn't hear any other voice. Lucifer either had nothing else to say, or she didn't want to be swayed by my words, but I wasn't happy about this one-sided conversation. I understood the fact that there were many restrictions, but I had to question everything because I had no idea what she was hiding and what she knew.

I didn't like the feeling of having basically zero knowledge of what was going on. No one would be happy about being under someone else's control. I knew I didn't really have the right to say that, but I was the type of person who led people rather than being led by others.

Even if Lucifer's desire would end up helping me, I couldn't just accept it if it meant being under her control.

'All right, do whatever you want.'

It had already been several minutes since Park Lian started carrying me down the large dungeon. Park Lian looked exhausted, but I couldn't tell her to take her time.

'Move faster.'

"I know you're tired, but…" I paused.

"*Huff,* okay. *Puff…"* Park Lian replied.

"Thank you."

"…"

'I'll seriously reward you once this is over.'

I had to pressure her because the ongoing situation between Kim Hyun-Sung and Rafael was getting serious.

'Still nothing from Benigoa?'

Of course, Benigoa was silent.

However, I honestly wasn't expecting her to fix things quickly.

'Shit, man.'

I turned my attention to Kim Hyun-Sung, and I got the feeling that the situation was becoming more serious. Rafael looked startled by the appearance of an unknown energy.

I closed up on Rafael's throat as he gulped. The energy flowing out of Kim Hyun-Sung was shocking enough to turn the chatterbox Rafael into a mute.

He was talking about how Kim Hyun-Sung was finally showing his true colors or whatever, but he probably had no idea that his voice was trembling.

- *Ahhhh!*

Rafael swung his sword while yelling, but the gray light was getting deflected by an invisible veil; no, it was more like the gray light was refusing to approach Kim Hyun-Sung.

-…

Kim Hyun-Sung slowly raised his head, and I noticed that he looked gloomier than ever. The look in his eyes told me that he hated himself. The swirling pitch-black darkness orbited him, and it was so strong that I felt a shiver down my spine as

goosebumps broke out all over me. I could feel it, even though I was a bit far away.

'Shit, don't do it! Don't.'

"Don't do it! Damn it!" I shouted.

A pair of pitch-black wings abruptly emerged from Kim Hyun-Sung's back, followed by another pair of wings.

"…"

And another pair…

"Fuck…"

And another pair…

The ten wings on his back made him look cool, but I felt my heart sink.

Kim Hyun-Sung lifted his head. He seemed aware that I was running toward him, and he didn't look too happy about the idea. I could still see the worry in his eyes because I was in a bad condition, but he bit his lips tightly upon seeing his own new look.

He was most likely worried about what I would think of him after he had established a contract with a demon.

'You can turn back to your old self, right? There's still hope, right?'

Unfortunately, the information I saw using Mind's Eye destroyed the glimmer of hope in my heart.

[Checking Kim Hyun-Sung's Unique Habit.]

[Sunset Sinking Into the Nauseating Darkness.]

'I should've been careful.'

I had to reflect on myself.

I thought it was going to be fine and that it wasn't going to be a big deal, but…

Who would have known that Lucifer was the *Nauseating Darkness?*

'Shit.'

I couldn't help but bite my lips.

CHAPTER 645
DOOM HYUN-SUNG (1)

I saw Kim Hyun-Sung from afar, and I couldn't decide whether I should enter now or enter later because I was worried about having a negative effect on him.

It was awkward seeing him looking at himself as if he still hadn't gotten used to his own body, and I felt upset knowing that Lucifer was probably clapping her hands with a wicked smile.

'I'm really going to mess you up. Just you wait, damn it.'

My top priority at the moment was fixing this problem.

'Is there nothing wrong with him mentally? Can he make a sound judgment?'

I was most worried about Kim Hyun-Sung's current mental state. When I got into a contract with Belial, I didn't feel strange because my soul of light was like an impregnable fortress that didn't allow entry to even a single particle of darkness.

However, I admit that not everyone had such a high affinity with light.

A tainted soul was a pretty difficult penalty to handle, and it was evidenced by what happened to the demon contractors who signed a contract with the dirty crow. It was the same for Jin Cheong and Ito Sota. They didn't get into a contract with a demon because they were evil. They became evil after getting into a contract with a demon.

I wasn't sure how this contract was going to affect Kim Hyun-Sung. I thought he would change a bit under the influence of the negative emotions, but I didn't think that the regressor's mind and soul were that weak. Of course, I couldn't really tell how strong his mind was at the moment, but I couldn't see anything strange on the outside.

"*Ahhhhh!*"

Rafael roared and swung the sword of gray light. His wings spread wide open as if Rafael was declaring that the climax of the fight was about to begin. Kim Hyun-Sung was currently inspecting himself, so Rafael took advantage of that and attacked.

Rafael seemed certain that his attack would land. It wasn't a bad move, even in my eyes, and Kim Hyun-Sung looked like he had no time to react because Rafael was already so close to him.

Booooooom!

However, the figure that let out a miserable shriek and went flying was Rafael.

Kim Hyun-Sung didn't even swing his sword. He tapped Rafael with his palm, and the latter was sent flying toward the distant wall.

'What the… how come he's become so much stronger? How? Shit, what was that just now? Wow, that attack just now… '

Kim Hyun-Sung was definitely shocked by his own power because he looked down at himself. I didn't even have to use Mind's Eye to see that his stats had increased to absurd levels.

In fact, most of his status window was blurred and hidden even to my Mind's Eye. The only information I could see clearly was his Mythic-rank job —Corrupted Sword.

"*Hahaha…*"

I wasn't sure what his bitter laugh meant, but it didn't sound great.

"*Ha, haha.*"

"Shit!"

Rafael rushed toward Kim Hyun-Sung once more, but he was too weak against Kim Hyun-Sung.

Kim Hyun-Sung pummeled Rafael and dragged him across the floor as if he were using Rafael as a mop. However, he still looked dissatisfied, so he stepped on Rafael's back and grabbed Rafael's wings.

A grotesque noise echoed afterward as he tore Rafael's wings with his bare hands.

A shower of blood pelted Kim Hyun-Sung from above, and he looked pretty cold as he stood in the middle of the blood shower. Unfortunately, the scene itself wasn't that pretty at all, and it sent a shiver down my spine.

"*Ahhhhhh!*"

Rafael screamed, but Kim Hyun-Sung's expression remained indifferent. He stomped on Rafael's back and buried the latter's face into the ground while tearing another wing off Rafael's back.

"*Argh!*"

Booooooom!!!

"*Ah!*"

Booooooooooom!!

"*Ahhh…*"

'Shit, I think he kind of lost his mind. He hasn't gone crazy, has he?'

It seemed Doom Hyun-Sung had gotten a bit excited because of the earth-shattering power he had just obtained after turning his back on the light. However, the issue was that he had become more ruthless than he had ever been.

His priority earlier was either to incapacitate Rafael or grant him a swift death, but it was clear that Kim Hyun-Sung no longer cared about that. I started tapping my thigh, as the situation that I was afraid of the most had actually happened.

'I'm sure he hasn't gone crazy… yes… '

It seemed Kim Hyun-Sung was still trying to get used to his wings because the way they moved made my hair stand on end. Soon, he was drenched in blood. Honestly, his expression was scarier than Jung Ha-Yan in her prime.

Kim Hyun-Sung lifted Rafael by the neck, and he seemed to be thinking about what was the most painful way to kill Rafael.

'He's fuckin' strong.'

I could say that Kim Hyun-Sung's immense power felt like a power closer to the gods rather than to humans. Kim Hyun-Sung was giving off this intense air that I felt from Belial when we first met.

'Shit. What if he really is stronger than Belial?'

I was probably just exaggerating, but he looked like he could beat the high-ranking commanders of the 72 Legions without any issues.

I could feel Park Lian shivering in fear while carrying me. Park Lian saw Kim Hyun-Sung's current look and realized that there was something wrong. I didn't find her reaction that surprising. I mean, who could remain calm seeing an individual drenched in blood with jet-black wings on their back?

To make matters worse, the winged individual was the guild master of the guild Park Lian was affiliated with, so her reaction wasn't unexpected at all.

Just then, Kim Hyun-Sung looked at me slowly.

He let go of Rafael and looked at me nervously. I was sure he wanted to look as pitiful as possible, but he clearly had no idea that he had achieved the opposite effect because of his current look. Actually, I had no idea how to react to his current form.

'Should I deny it? Is that the right thing to do?'

"Mr. Ki-Young…" Kim Hyun-Sung called out.

"…"

"Mr. K-Ki-Young," he repeated.

'Ah, shit.'

"Mr. Ki-Young…"

Kim Hyun-Sung slowly approached me. His wings opened slightly, and he looked like he was flying toward me slowly when he kicked off of the ground, but it didn't take long for him to reach me.

The interesting part was that even though Park Lian was trembling in fear, she still took out her sword to protect me. She definitely considered Kim Hyun-Sung as an enemy at the moment. Honestly, I couldn't criticize her because I would've done the same thing if I were in her shoes.

"R-Run, Sub Guild Master. You must run. He's… not the guild master. He's a monster…" Park Lian muttered.

'Do you feel that way, too? Should we run?'

"I-I'll deal with him," she added.

'There's no need to run. I don't think that's the right thing to do… but I am kind of scared. And I don't really think that we can run from here in the first place.'

I was sure Park Lian was aware of that fact as well—there was no way we could run out of here. Her voice and legs were shaking, and it was my first time seeing this side of her, even though I had already spent a lot of time with her.

'She's scared.'

The same Park Lian who was selfless enough to give up her life for the sake of completing her mission was scared. To make matters worse, she was having a hard time breathing properly.

"You did a good job as well, Miss Lian," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"Stay away. Stay away from the sub guild master… y-you dirty demon…" Park Lian stuttered.

"Amazing. Yes, that's the kind of attitude I expected from you. Your decision just now is a bit disappointing, but… thank you for your hard work," he complimented her.

"D-Don't come any closer…" she said.

'You're not going to hurt her either, are you?'

I couldn't really say I was relieved, but Kim Hyun-Sung grabbed Park Lian's hand and slowly lowered her sword. Park Lian couldn't move because she was frozen in fear, and the way she collapsed to the ground in horror made it seem like she was truly in

front of the devil.

I wasn't sure if Kim Hyun-Sung was being considerate of me, but I wasn't trembling. I knew he wasn't going to harm me because worry and anxiety were the only emotions I could see on his face. He actually looked more scared than me, and he looked like he wanted to run away and hide from me.

'Shit, that's a relief. I'm really relieved.'

It was clear that he didn't awaken into a crazy bastard who couldn't tell the difference between allies and enemies. I thought he was going to hug me right afterward, but the blood on him had to be bothering him because he looked antsy.

I was glad to know that he was still the Kim Hyun-Sung that I know…

'How should I respond to this?'

I couldn't figure out what to do because this was my first time encountering something like this.

'Should I pretend like I'm in pain?'

That was out of the question…

'Or… would it be better to greet him the same way I normally do?'

That would be strange…

Kim Hyun-Sung had gotten into a contract with a demon, so it didn't make sense to greet him as usual. However, I could see worry, regret, nervousness, and an unknown fear on his face.

'This entire situation is shitty. Ha, I'm really annoyed.'

I told myself that I needed to say something, but I couldn't say anything.

However, it wasn't because of Kim Hyun-Sung.

'A rebound.'

I had been using the telescope for an extended period of time, and it was finally taking a toll on me. I tried not to frown in pain to avoid agitating Kim Hyun-Sung, and I told myself to like my usual self, but all I could do was frown awkwardly.

I still couldn't get used to this excruciating headache that made me feel like rolling on the ground and screaming.

'Ah, shit… What should I do? Shit, Lucifer. Damn it, Lucifer. Damn it.'

Kim Hyun-Sung suddenly said, "It's okay now. Everything is going to be fine."

'What's okay?'

He sounded like he was desperately holding back his tears.

"It'll be fine now. You won't have to suffer any longer," he repeated.

'So what do you mean by that?'

"I was wrong," he said.

"*Ah, ugh…*"

"You don't have to worry about my responsibilities anymore," he continued.

'Shit. He's not trying to cut ties with me, is he?'

For some reason, I started feeling more and more anxious, thinking that perhaps Kim Hyun-Sung had started thinking about abandoning the continent. I told myself that I was mistaken, but sadly, forebodings were more accurate than not.

"It was a burden that I didn't have to carry from the start," he said.

'No, you have to carry it, you crazy bastard. You have to carry it… '

"I-It's all over now…" he stuttered.

'No, it's not over, you crazy bastard… ' When I heard Kim Hyun-Sung say that he would cut ties with the continent, I couldn't help but glare hatefully at him. *'I can't abandon it, damn it. If you want to abandon the continent, do it yourself.'*

CHAPTER 646
DOOM HYUN-SUNG (2)

It seemed Kim Hyun-Sung thought of my expression as a form of rejection because his expression turned serious. The tinge of surprise on his face made me confirm my assumption. I felt kind of bad for the continuous blows that I was about to deal to him, but I grabbed my head in pain and muttered, “Who are you?”

“…”

Kim Hyun-Sung’s eyes went empty. He looked lifeless. My words just now were very misleading, so I decided to speak once more to ensure that he wouldn’t misunderstand.

“I just asked who you are,” I repeated.

Kim Hyun-Sung’s expression was grim, but he seemed to be feeling better than before.

Kim Hyun-Sung was wondering if I was losing my memories, and it seemed that his assumption made him comprehend my question just now in that manner.

I thought it would be bad to continue acting like I had amnesia, but the unfortunate part was that it wouldn’t work here. Actually, I couldn’t use that method at all because I couldn’t make him feel even more confused.

“…”

“I…”

“…”

“I’m still the same Kim Hyun-Sung that you know, Mr. Ki-Young. I’m just a bit… Yes, I understand that you’re shocked because you’re not… used to this form of mine. I know you’re uneasy… and disgusted by it,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

'It's not just that, man. You look like an actual psycho, but I wouldn't go so far as to say that I'm disgusted… '

Kim Hyun-Sung was drenched in blood, and his eyes emitted an eerie crimson glow. He was also pretty dirty.

"But if you hear me out… you'll see that we didn't need to carry that burden in the first place. They're the enemy," he said.

'Who's they?'

"The ones who brought me back and the ones you follow are unnecessary beings. They never make any sacrifices. They just make us do their bidding by deceiving us with sugar coated words. Of course, it goes against your belief, but I just realized that… we don't need to go out of our way to fight for them," he explained.

'The Kim Hyun-Sung that I know wouldn't have said those things.'

I wanted to say that cheesy line, but I didn't think that it'd be that effective on him.

'You sold yourself to the demon?'

It didn't sound like a good idea to say something like that to him. Whenever one was unsure of what to do, staying quiet was the best option. I tried pushing his wings away again, but he was so strong that his wings wouldn't budge.

'What's wrong with you, damn it?'

"They're eating away at you. They bring ordinary people to the continent against their will to test them and drive them to the edge of the cliff.

"Rafael is also nothing more than a tool to trick you. Those beings trick people by using sweet words like—I'm a god, and I have chosen you. They then pressure people with useless burdens and responsibilities.

"They give hope and courage, but in the end, they don't take responsibility for anything, so there's no need for you to work for the continent.

"Just think about yourself from now on. We shouldn't have divided the responsibility in the first place. We… shouldn't have… I wouldn't have relied on you if I had known

that this was going to happen," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

'That's not true.'

"If you hadn't overdone it, you wouldn't have been suffering like this. You wouldn't… lose your memories either," he added.

"How…"

"They can't even take responsibility for their decisions. You don't need to help those who continuously drive people to the edge of the cliff. The light didn't abandon us—the light wasn't on our side in the first place," he continued.

"So you chose…" I paused.

'To look like that?'

"I didn't have a choice," he said.

"…"

'That crazy crow bitch. Be prepared to be backstabbed hard.'

Honestly, I couldn't argue with Kim Hyun-Sung's explanation.

'They're crazy bastards. Actually, it's better to think that they're just being ridiculous.'

They said that it wasn't their intention to put us into this world, but it was an undeniable fact that they had driven Kim Hyun-Sung to the edge of the cliff.

They had burdened him with responsibilities and burdens that he didn't want to carry, and they gave all those to a human with the excuse that they couldn't intervene with what was going on with mankind.

Of course, it made sense for us to fight for the continent, as it was our home, but…

'It's a different story if the Outer God is the main villain.'

A human couldn't possibly fight a god, so they told us that we had to stop the upcoming threat of the Outer God and granted powers to humans without consent.

They selected chosen humans and forced them to fight for such a cause.

Kim Hyun-Sung was aware that I was losing my memories while I was fighting for the continent, so I knew what he was feeling while staring at me. He thought it was unfair and that it was a curse. He also thought that I wouldn't have gotten kidnapped if it hadn't been for the holy sword that the gods had bestowed upon us.

These were the words that Kim Hyun-Sung probably wanted to say to me, and I couldn't help but recall the crying Kim Hyun-Sung I had met in his subconscious world. The Kim Hyun-Sung at the time had said that he never wanted to carry such burdens.

'All this time… '

His ethical beliefs and his nature as the Kind-hearted Mediator had probably been holding him back all this time. I was glad to see Doom Hyun-Sung because he was capable of thinking outside the box, but I disliked this situation.

'So, are you going to start working under Lucifer?' It was a bad decision, and I couldn't help but laugh at it. *'Actually, I think Lucifer doesn't even care in the first place, as no one really knows how many continents she's managing aside from this one.'*

The tiny continent we were in could probably be just one of the many continents beneath her. I was grateful that she valued Kim Hyun-Sung and me more than this continent, but it was bad news for me, as I had many things to do here.

I was sure that Belial didn't want to see this situation at all.

Belial definitely didn't want to witness the death of the goose capable of laying golden eggs. Yes, Belial was definitely unhappy about all this.

'I've achieved so much here… and you want me to leave all of this behind?'

"…"

'Stop talking shit, man. I'll never give up what I have. You think it'll be that easy to take things from me?'

I thought maybe Kim Hyun-Sung would come back to his senses if I punched him, but I was afraid my hand was going to break because of my low Endurance. I bit my lips

while tapping my thighs, but I couldn't think of a good idea.

I wasn't sure how long Benigoa was going to get stuck in a corner, but they probably had no idea that the regressor they were in charge of was in this condition.

"The others…" I said.

"They have their own lives to live," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"And the people following me?" I asked.

"It's the same, so you don't have to be responsible for them," he replied.

'Our Hyun-Sung, shit… He became such a pessimistic guy… '

"What about the Blue Guild?" I asked.

"I can save them, at least," he answered.

'That sounds great.'

If someone were to ask me if there was one thing I found to my liking, it would be the fact that all this happened because of me. Kim Hyun-Sung ended up becoming Doom Hyun-Sung, but…

'His personality didn't really change that much.'

His appearance and the light in his eyes had changed drastically, but he still cherished me. I thought he had become completely evil, so I was nervous, but my nervousness didn't last long because he was nothing more than an adolescent boy going through puberty.

I could definitely change his mind because he would never harm me. The fact that he was still in his right mind was hard proof that I had more than enough ways to turn him back to his original self.

Of course, he seemed more determined than usual, but he was still the same old Kim Hyun-Sung.

"Move," I told him.

"…"

"I told you to move," I repeated.

"I knew you were…"

"I said move," I interrupted him.

Kim Hyun-Sung bit his lips, but he moved slightly with a serious gaze.

I ran past him, and Kim Hyun-Sung's gaze bothered me.

I was sure he didn't want to move because he didn't want to show the things he had done to me. However, he didn't stop me, and it had to be his way of showing that he was truly determined.

I decided to check up on Rafael. I had already cut ties with him, but it would be better to keep on using him if he could still be useful.

'He's still alive.'

I honestly had no idea if he would recover at all, but he was still breathing at the very least. I tried using my holy power, but it didn't do anything. He was riddled with wounds, and he actually looked dead from afar.

It was a miracle that he was still breathing. The other party members of the chosen warrior party were in bad condition, but they were still breathing.

'I honestly don't know if they'll be useful.'

"They were your comrades," I told him.

"They're enemies, and they tried to harm you, Mr. Ki-Young. I was just trying not to get stuck in the past," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"This all started because of a minor misunderstanding. They did nothing wrong," I said.

"…"

I saw hostility in Kim Hyun-Sung's eyes. He would have finished them off if it hadn't been for my timely appearance. No, he was actually thinking about killing them at the moment. The only reason he hadn't done it just yet was that I was here.

"Don't worry about them anymore. Come with me," he said.

"I won't go with you," I rejected.

I was kind of scared, but I decided to throw a tantrum for now because I didn't want to go to Lucifer while feeling this way.

"I'll take you by force if I have to," he warned.

'How are you going to take me by force?'

I had to take the initiative. I couldn't get scared. I had to be confident.

He had sold himself to the darkness and became Doom Hyun-Sung, but he was still the same old Kim Hyun-Sung.

He never really had a friend, but he believed that even our souls were best friends, so there was no way he would get rid of me. He had never had a genuine relationship with other people, so he wouldn't lay a hand on me. If I were the reason behind his corruption, I should have the upper hand here.

'What the hell are you going to do? What's up with that scary face, Kim Hyun-Sung? What are you going to do? I know you're just acting.'

"I'll forcefully…" Kim Hyun-Sung trailed off.

'Hit me? Shit, hit me if you can. Knock me out. Just beat me half to death and take me away, damn it. Let's see who will suffer the most between us. Hit me! Kill me! But keep this one thing in mind, man. The moment you lay your hand on me, it's over between us. Our relationship is over from that point on.'

"Take action…" he continued.

'Knock me out. You can do it quite easily, damn it. Hit me! Let me get compensated for it today. Hurry up and hit me.'

“If you don’t listen to me, I’ll forcefully—I won’t warn you again. I’m being serious here,” he warned.

‘Huh? Shit, did you just raise your hand? Did you really? Are you really going to hit me?’

“Even if it’s you, Mr. Ki-Young…” he trailed off.

‘All right, shit. This is the thanks I get after giving you food and helping you make money? Have you really forgotten what I’ve done for you because you’ve been corrupted? Is that it? All right, shit. Hit me! Kill me! Break my bones! You beat me up when I became Doom Ki-Young, so why can’t you do that now?!’

“Please don’t test my patience,” he said.

‘I’m not testing you, so beat me up already. You’re not putting mana into your hands, are you? Right?’

“I really…” he hesitated.

‘Yeah, just hit me already. Beat me to your heart’s content… ’

“Just kill me,” I said.

‘Because the light never surrenders to the darkness!’

Shit, that was cool.

“How could I…” he mumbled.

‘Right?’

“Kill me,” I repeated.

‘I’m going to be martyred, damn it. Kill me! Martyr me.’

I saw Kim Hyun-Sung swinging his hand. I cowered, afraid that this bastard was actually going to hit me, but thankfully, he just punched a wall.

Boom!

A deafening explosion echoed, and a wall crumbled to pieces.

“I can’t… kill you,” he said.

I knew it.

“There’s no way I’ll kill you,” he told me.

I immediately thought that I could turn him back.

CHAPTER 647
DOOM HYUN-SUNG (3)

I was right. Kim Hyun-Sung was just pretending like he was evil. His true nature had remained unchanging; I could tell just by looking at his confused eyes filled with tears.

Right now, he was frustrated and scared. He also detested his appearance. He knew that this couldn't continue, but there was nothing he could do. Actually, I would hold his hand and go to hell with him if he dared to punch me, but he had never even entertained the idea of harming me.

'You bastard… How dare you pretend to be almighty in front of me.'

I knew he relied on me, but I didn't know it was to this extent, and that was why I thought I had a chance to turn him back. I felt sad about the idea of losing Doom Hyun-Sung, but…

'Ah, shit. It really is a waste.'

I had to hurry up and turn Kim Hyun-Sung back. In addition to taking care of his mental health, things would also become troublesome if I were to act too late.

"If you can't kill me, then get away from me," I told him.

'You dirty demon! He'd probably get really hurt if I called him that, right? Should I be a little nicer about it? Still, don't get too hurt by it, Hyun-Sung. I have no choice. Why'd you have to go and turn evil?'

"…"

"I-I'm disappointed…" I stuttered.

This should be okay, right?

"I'm disappointed," I repeated.

I was sure he was shocked, and I knew what kind of reaction he had without looking back at him. I eventually glanced at him and saw his pupils quivering. He was biting his lips as well, and he looked as if I had attacked him mentally.

It seemed like it was thinking that it was already too late. I turned to look at him; I wanted to make sure that he would be affected by my words.

"I'm really… disappointed in you, Mr. Hyun-Sung."

'Do you know whose power that is? It's not even yours. No matter how desperate you are, you shouldn't have gotten into a contract with a demon. How do you think that decision will make me look? And it had to be Lucifer of all demons… '

"It was because of—" Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"That's a cowardly excuse," I interrupted him.

"It's not an excuse. I had no other choice," he said.

"I'm sure you would've found a way," I said.

"It's not that easy to find a way, and you don't know since you've never experienced it. No, even if things work out, I'm sure… I'm sure you…" he trailed.

'You're sure that I'll still lose my memories? You're sure I'll suffer from side effects or break down?'

Obviously, he couldn't say *that* word, but he was thinking about it.

Honestly, it wasn't that strange for him to entertain that thought. Kim Hyun-Sung was the only one who knew just how dangerous the game we were playing at the moment.

We had been preparing diligently, but there was a high chance that it might not work out like the future I saw, thanks to Kasugano Yuno's help. A festival of slaughter could happen, and the people Kim Hyun-Sung cherished might die.

Of course, the deep conversation we had in the subconscious world had helped him overcome his fear of carrying such burdens, but I couldn't say that he had been completely freed from those chains because we ended up carrying those burdens

together.

I was sure that he was more than happy at the idea of someone else carrying such burdens with him, but he also ended up having a new dilemma because of that.

'He's… '

"…"

'He's wondering what's going to happen to me once the continent wins… '

Kim Hyun-Sung realized that I would end up suffering throughout the journey and even after the continent's victory. In addition to my body weakening day by day, I would also become nothing but a living shell.

Kim Hyun-Sung would cry at the death of his comrades and blame himself for their departure. He would plunge into the darkness out of shame, and he would be heartbroken. In the end, he would be ruined.

I was sure that was what he was thinking.

He had already experienced it once, so he knew the situation better than anyone.

He wouldn't feel alive by then, and he couldn't let me walk on the road of thorns with him.

He was probably thinking that the weak Lee Ki-Young wasn't as strong as him. He might be thinking that I was dying both physically and mentally. To make matters worse, I was already losing my memories. He knew I had reached my limits a long time ago, and he realized that he could no longer share his burdens with me.

He had been denying it, and Rafael was the one who convinced him.

Kim Hyun-Sung concluded that nothing would change even if the outcome were different. Regardless of victory or defeat, the only fate awaiting him was suffering.

He—chained by the cursed light—knew from his experience that he wasn't strong enough to endure the upcoming war. And what if he somehow managed to take it and survive until the continent emerged victorious—he would still end up being abandoned.

'Man, he's really afraid. I won't get hurt, man. I'm not losing my memories either, but my body is frail, so I'll definitely be weaker by the end of it. That's all, though. I'm going to live for six thousand years. I won't die, man.'

I wanted to say that, but I couldn't do that. I mean, I couldn't just come out and tell him something along the lines of, *"Ah, that was a flat-out lie. It worked pretty well, right? It turns out that if I tell people that I'm sick, they'll start taking care of me and cheering for me, so that's why I maintained that lie. You understand? We're still friends, right?"*

There was no way he would believe me, but I was convinced that I still had to tell him that I was fine and that he didn't have to worry about me.

"I'm fine. You don't have to worry about me," I said.

"…"

"The amnesia isn't as serious as you think. I just can't remember recent events. It's not as dangerous as you think, so don't worry," I reassured him.

"You're lying," Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

'I'm not lying.'

"I'm not lying," I told him.

"Stop lying," he said.

'What's wrong with you? Why are you looking at me like that? You look like you want to hit me.'

"Really…"

"I told you to stop lying! You were like this every day. You always said that you were fine, but do you really think that I will believe you? Do you really think I will?! There's no need for you to sacrifice yourself. You don't need to sacrifice yourself for strangers!" he yelled.

'Hey, you're scaring me. Shit, stop being angry.'

“Don’t hide things from me, damn it! I won’t know if you don’t tell me,” he continued.

‘Damn it, Doom Hyun-Sung. What’s up with that hot temper, man.’

I was kind of scared of him, but a straightforward battle tactic was the best tactic against him.

“I’m really okay,” I told him.

“…”

“I’m really fine. I can accept it,” I added.

I had to look him straight in the eye. I had to show him my tough side so that I could convince him that I could endure and overcome it. Kim Hyun-Sung definitely felt my unwavering gaze for justice because he started biting his lips. I couldn’t help but think that I was about to succeed, and that was when a small change happened.

~

[A Rare-ranked Forced Quest has been activated. (0/1)]

[Father Lee Ki-Young! I-I did it! I took care of it!]

~

‘Yeah, it must be nice knowing that you took care of it, damn it. It’s already over. Can’t you see that things have gone completely wrong here? Shit.’

~

[A Rare-ranked Forced Quest has been activated. (0/1)]

[I-I’m sorry. You know I love you, right? Y-You see… Lucifer set up a really complicated barrier, so the higher-ups suffered a lot because of it. A-And they feel really bad about the current situation. (0/1)]

~

‘Can you turn Kim Hyun-Sung back?’

~

[I'm… not sure. I'll need some time since I have a lot of things I need to look into. It is impossible right now, but I don't think you should worry too much about it, Father Lee Ki-Young. (0/1)]

~

'…'

~

[The higher-ups have decided to give you full support b-because they want this handled as soon as possible. I'll explain later. (0/1)]

~

'Shit, the timing is really bad. Damn it, why didn't they just… '

Booooooooom!

A pillar of dazzling light struck me from above. The dazzling white light turned golden as it enveloped me.

'Wow, these bastards… '

I couldn't help but laugh at the absurd situation.

'What? You can't help?'

I suddenly realized why the higher-ups had decided to go all in to support me and why I was suddenly struck by a large pillar of light even though they had never replied positively to any of my requests in the past.

'Wow, these bastards are seriously… '

It was all because of Kim Hyun-Sung…

They became desperate upon seeing Doom Hyun-Sung, so they hurriedly gave me power on par with what Lucifer had allowed Kim Hyun-Sung to borrow. I had an idea

as to what was going on up there right now.

Kim Hyun-Sung had already turned his back on them, and he had received immense power from Lucifer. Of course, the higher-ups wouldn't just stand by and watch. They were worried that both Kim Hyun-Sung and I would start working for Lucifer, which was probably the worst-case scenario in their eyes.

Kim Hyun-Sung had turned his back on the gods and had received a ton of power from Lucifer. There wasn't anything they could realistically do about it, as it had already happened, so…

'They're in a hurry to win me over.'

I was surprised by the higher-ups' bold decision because I thought the only thing they were capable of doing was taking things slowly and surely.

The outcome surprised me the most.

Kim Hyun-Sung went pallid, and he started shouting, "Shit! Shit!"

Honestly, this wasn't too bad.

'This is free! A free level-up!'

I felt like giving the higher-ups a thumbs-up, and I even wondered if Lucifer thought that the higher-ups up above would go this far. However, Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't happy about the divine phenomenon that was happening in front of him right now.

'I'm leveling up! I'm going to get minted into a Mythic-ranked coin as well!'

I was sure that the pillar of divine light was like a cursed coffin. A burdensome fate was being forced on me right in front of his eyes. That was what I thought based on Kim Hyun-Sung's current expression.

"Shit! Don't do it! Stop! You bastards! Stop! Leave him alone! Leave him alone!" Kim Hyun-Sung shouted.

'No, I have to do this. Give me more! Give me light! Give me light!'

"Stop! I said stop! Don't make him carry any more burdens! No more! Mr. Ki-Young!

Get away from there! Get away!" he yelled.

'No, I think this is my fate. Staying with the light must be my fate. And I also can't get out when the light has trapped me.'

Kim Hyun-Sung stretched out his hand while swinging his sword as best as he could against the pillar of light, but he couldn't really do anything because of the holy light.

A sizzling sound echoed from his arm, but he continued crawling into the light.

Honestly, the sight kind of touched me.

"Don't do it… *Heuk*! Don't do it! What more are you going to do… What more do you want me to do…" he cried.

"It's fine, Mr. Hyun-Sung. I chose this path," I told him.

I was basically a saint who was fighting for the continent with all my might.

This was the epitome of sacrifice. Light Ki-Young, the radiant light, had accepted his fate despite knowing he was going to be destroyed in the end. Honestly, I never really thought of that setting at all, but…

'Ah, what should I do with you, Kim Hyun-Sung?'

He looked so desperate that I couldn't quite savor the beautiful setting that was unfolding right in front of my eyes.

CHAPTER 648
DOOM HYUN-SUNG (4)

A dazzling pillar of light had enveloped me, and it felt different from when I became the Alchemist of Light. Holy power filled me up, and I thought that I had to look like a saint who had just decided to sacrifice himself for the continent's sake, but I was having a hard time hiding my smile.

Kim Hyun-Sung was desperately trying to stop the light, but I thought it was about time he realized that what he was doing was useless. The higher-ups were the ones who had made this decision rather than Benigoa.

Kim Hyun-Sung had become even stronger, but he wasn't strong enough to deny fate.

In the end, all he could do was swing his sword in desperation. His ten swings, which had become the symbols of his corruption, couldn't do anything to stop the light. How could he cut down a pillar of light made out of the purest holy power?

"*Ahh*…"

My body started changing.

'Am I going to get wings as well?'

As soon as that thought came to mind, wings of light started to sprout on my back.

'I'll have ten wings, right? I want ten.'

I thought that perhaps it would be painful, but the pure white wings actually seemed to be filling me up with holy power. While this was happening, I saw Kim Hyun-Sung's hand piercing the light.

'Shit, how did you pierce it?'

"Shit, shit!"

I noticed him trying really hard to pull me out, but I didn't want to go with him. I wanted to transform first before going out of the pillar of light. Thankfully, a gust of wind made out of a radiant light blew him away, but he got up and rushed toward me at once.

"I'm gonna bring you out! I'm gonna reach you and bring you out!" he shouted.

He even used his ink-like black magic to pierce the pillar of light.

'Can I speed up this transformation?'

He looked really desperate.

'Seriously, man.'

I was kind of touched because he looked like Park Deok-Gu back then, but I wasn't happy about this situation. It would have been great if he had just stood still and watched, knowing that it was impossible for him to do anything at this point.

However, I was really shocked to see that he had decided to attempt to stop the light from falling down on me like a waterfall.

'Is that even possible?'

Watching Kim Hyun-Sung trying to stop the light falling from the sky with his ink-like black magic was a sight to see. He had to have realized that it was impossible to enter the light and drag me out, so he probably decided to just overpower the falling light with his abilities.

Booooooooom!!

I heard a loud explosion, but the pillar of light remained quiet.

'Hyun-Suuung… Shit, don't do that. You shouldn't stop others from leveling up.'

I was sure the higher-ups were shocked as well.

They were at the point where they had to give the light to someone, and since it was already too late for Kim Hyun-Sung, they probably thought that they had to win me over at the very least.

However, Kim Hyun-Sung was actually trying to stop the falling light, so…

'I'm sure they're really shocked.'

I was sure that Benigoa—the icon of failure—was afraid that she was going to fail once again.

[Father Lee Ki-Young, Father Lee Ki-Young!! (0/1)]

As expected, Benigoa started yelling at me.

"*Ahhhhhhh!*"

Kim Hyun-Sung was still trying his best to stop the heavy burden that was being forced on me. Honestly, I had no idea how things took such a drastic turn.

'Hyun-Sung, it's not like I have to take responsibility or anything just because I'm receiving this light. I didn't sign a contract, and it doesn't matter if I just run away with this power. They gave it to me because they're nervous, so why are you being so sensitive about it? I understand how you feel, but… '

[Father Lee Ki-Young! Try stopping him. Father Lee Ki-Youuung! (0/1)]

'I want to stop him as well, damn it. Shit, increase the output.'

[O-Okay. (0/1)]

Benigoa listened to my advice because a stronger light burst out of me, but Kim Hyun-Sung shouted even louder to resist the light. I had no choice but to think that I had to do something because I didn't think that receiving this power would be a problem.

As time passed, Kim Hyun-Sung's eyes became filled with more rage.

Just like how the higher-ups had given him responsibilities and burdens that he had never wished to receive, did it truly look like they were forcing the same on me at the moment?

He was probably afraid that I would experience the same hell he had gone through in his previous life.

“Stop! You dirty bastards! Stop… please stop…” Kim Hyun-Sung shouted.

‘So our Hyun-Sung knows how to curse.’

“Stop… Stop it!!!”

It had been a while since he actually got injured

[Father Lee Ki-Young… What should we do? This isn’t a serious problem, is it? (0/1)]

Kim Hyun-Sung looked so desperate right now that even Benigoa started worrying. He had been cursing a lot, but he definitely didn’t have the luxury to even curse now as spite filled his eyes.

[Should I stop? S-Should I… stop? (0/1)]

I thought it would be a great idea because I was worried that he would become hostile toward Benigoa and the other gods. Doom Hyun-Sung would most likely evolve to his final form once he had decided to thoroughly abandon the continent.

I could probably turn him back if all he wanted to do were cut ties with the continent, but thoroughly abandoning the continent was a different story. Doom Hyun-Sung would destroy the continent with the Outer God if that were to happen, and he would then rush toward Benigoa’s home along with the demons down below.

“Shit, shit!!! Stop it, you bastards!”

I had to say something to calm Kim Hyun-Sung down.

I had to convince him that this was a good thing, so I decided to speak to him calmly.

‘Whoo… ’

I honestly wasn’t sure if this was going to work. Normally, he would listen, but I couldn’t guarantee that he would listen in his current state. After taking a deep breath, I started talking.

“It’s okay,” I said.

“…”

"…"

'Can he not hear me?'

"I told you that it's fine," I repeated.

"…"

'Hyun-Sung, are you ignoring me? You're not, right?'

"It's really nothing. The burden I'm carrying isn't as heavy as you think, and I'm sure I won't experience any hardships. This is actually a good thing. I'm happy about this," I explained.

'Please… Please work.'

"I'm glad to know that there's something I can do with the time I have left," I added.

"…"

"I'm happy that there's something I can do for the people who are important to me. Of course, I know it'll be difficult, and I know what you're thinking, Mr. Hyun-Sung. I know very well why you're worried about me," I continued.

"…"

'Man, this guy isn't showing any reaction.'

However, he was definitely listening to me because he was staring at me.

'This topic alone isn't going to work.'

I needed to talk about a more sensitive topic, like the main reason why Kim Hyun-Sung became Doom Hyun-Sung. I figured that would be more convincing than me telling him that my mind had suddenly gotten clearer and better.

I was sure he would react since it was a sensitive topic. Yes, it was a sensitive topic, but my priority here was for us to actually talk to each other and listen to each other's concerns.

“I’m… sorry that I didn’t tell you… about that incident,” I apologized.

“…”

“But I really didn’t want to worry you, and I thought it wasn’t a big deal,” I added.

“…”

“Even if I lose my memories…” I paused.

“…”

“Even if I forget everything… I know that everyone will remain by my side,” I said.

“…”

“To me, I thought it wasn’t… that big of a problem. Don’t you think so? It’s not going to change anything. Once everything is over, our days in Lindel will remain unchanging,” I told him.

“…”

“I’m still going to play chess and drink wine with Miss Hye-Jin. I’m still going to see the World Tree with Miss Elena, and I will still be able to spend time with the elves. I can still play cards with Ye-Ri as well, and I can still browse Benigoa Net with Mr. Ahn Ki-Mo,” I said.

“…”

“I’m going to start learning the basics of alchemy with Mr. Jung-Yeon and Miss Sora. I’m worried that I might forget everything, but since my body remembers, I’m sure I’ll be a fast learner. I’m certain of it.

”In one, two—no, in three years, I’m sure I’ll be on the same level as I am at the moment. There won’t be any issues with the finances of the Blue Guild, and the infrastructure will remain the same… *haha*,” I laughed.

“…”

“I’ll do volunteer work with Miss Hee-Young. There are still many places I haven’t

visited just yet. Of course, I'm sure Dialugia will nag at me to spend time with Dialuria and Max," I added.

"…"

"I'll still talk to Miss Ah-Young and Mr. Chang-Ryeol. We're going to discuss how our training went and if we were having a great time. Since I'll go through many fun things and will experience new things, I'll definitely be laughing a lot by then. Yeah, I'll be laughing every day, and I'll probably ask them about what I did and if I even did that. I might even watch our old videos where we were having fun," I continued.

"…"

"I'm sure I'll still have a great time with Hee-Ra noona, who will definitely visit me from time to time. I won't be able to see her often because I'll be busy by then, but once the war is completely over, I'm sure she'll drag me around with her.

"And I'm sure it'll be difficult at first, but… I'll learn politics again from Miss Oscar. Then, I'll talk about theology again with Father Basel. I'll also talk to Miss Kim Mi-Young about how the guild works, and I'm sure there are many things I can learn from Miss Ji-Hye as well, such as learning how to live life… *haha*," I explained.

"Don't… do… it," Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

"If I continue staying with Ha-Yan, perhaps we'll get married someday, but for some reason, I can't really imagine it. Deok-Gu will probably applaud us. He'll probably have fun saying nonsense like how our relationship was all because of him shipping us together," I said.

"Stop… saying things… like that. *Heuk*, don't talk like that… Shit, just stop…" he muttered.

"I'm sure it'll be similar for you. We'll get out once in a while, ride our griffons together, laugh at silly things, and have fun like always," I told him.

"Please… please stop saying that. Please…" he begged.

"I want to protect this kind of life, and in the end, I don't think I'm being selfish. I just wanted to prioritize myself for now. I'm sure it'll be difficult, I'll get hurt, collapse, experience hardships, resent Goddess Benigoa, and perhaps I'll regret this decision

for the rest of my life. I might even complain about why you didn't stop me," I said.

"…"

"B-But in the end, we'll laugh about it. We'll all sit at a big table and laugh off the pains we had to go through while reminiscing about the good old days. I know we're going to do that because we've already been doing that. We've overcome so many hardships so far, and we've made it this far," I continued.

"…"

"Nothing will change," I added.

"No, m-many things will change. In the end, things won't be the same anymore. Everyone will suffer. Everyone will be tormented by the fact that you won't remember them, and i-it's the same for me, too. I'm scared. I'm afraid… *Heuk*. I'm scared… Shit!" he cursed.

"The other choice will bring pain as well. Thoroughly abandoning the continent won't bring you relief, Mr. Hyun-Sung. You'll be tormented by your guilt every day, and you're definitely going to regret the decision you've made today once the continent is in ruins.

"You'll regret ignoring those who needed your help until the day you die," I told him.

'I'm sure you'll feel that way. You know that you haven't completely abandoned the continent.'

"If you take me away forcefully, I'll end up resenting you," I said.

'Let's be honest here. Even if things go your way, I'll resent you for the rest of my life. Can you handle that? It'll be the end of our relationship. Are you ready to cut ties with me?'

"I'm certain you agree with me," I commented.

"…"

"Of course, I'm worried as well. I'm scared of fighting as well. To be honest, I'm scared of the current situation and the things that are happening to me… the changes

happening to me every day scares me a lot. How can I not be scared? I'm human, too," I confessed.

"Then…"

"However, I'm more scared of losing the life that I had grown fond of. I'm more scared of losing… us and the future. I'm so scared that it can't be compared to the fear I feel whenever I realize that I've lost yet another chunk of my memories. I'm sure… everyone thinks that way, but they'll definitely fight…" I trailed off.

"…"

"They'll fight to protect their daily lives and their future," I added.

"You can't take it. You'll regret it! You're going to lose!" he warned.

"No, *we* can take it," I said.

"You'll be tormented," he said.

"I won't be," I told him.

"You'll be in so much pain that you'll think of dying as a release…" he said.

"I'm sure it'll be painful," I said.

"You'll lose everything," he added.

"It's fine as long as I have someone next to me by then," I told him.

"H-How can you think of it like that? How can you accept it so easily? How can you just… accept it? Shit…" he questioned.

'What do you mean how? That's because I know you'll resolve the issues for me as the tactical Kim Hyun-Sung.'

However, I couldn't tell him that. During dramatic moments like this, saying a memorable line would be the best course of action. Of course, it was under the condition that I wouldn't remember that I even said it.

“That’s because…” I paused.

“…”

“I believe you’ll carry the burden with me,” I continued.

“…”

“…”

‘I’m honestly not sure if this will even work.’

However, Kim Hyun-Sung would definitely realize that he had to carry the burden with me and that he shouldn’t behave like this. Life was all about mutual aid, after all. I was sure Kim Hyun-Sung would remember I had been carrying his burden with him.

‘I’m sure it’ll work.’

I was sure he would do the same and help me carry the burdens that the higher-ups had forced on me.

‘Please… please… ’

He wouldn’t just abandon me.

‘Right? Right? We don’t have to cut ties, right?’

I wasn’t sure if the timing was great, but the pillar of light falling like a waterfall on me abruptly vanished. I couldn’t help but feel nervous. I couldn’t see the ink-like black magic that Kim Hyun-Sung had unleashed, but I also had no idea about how he would react.

The light scattered slowly, and I saw Kim Hyun-Sung staring at me in a daze.

‘Not bad, not bad.’

I was anxious, but I slowly stretched my hand out toward him as four pairs of wings spread wide open behind me.

"*Heuk, heuuuk…!*" Kim Hyun-Sung cried as he ran towards me.

'It worked. Shit, it worked!'

Let us end this on a good note. You just need to wrap this up, Ki-Young.

CHAPTER 649
DOOM HYUN-SUNG (5)

Kim Hyun-Sung didn't look that scary anymore when he ran in a hurry toward me. I wasn't sure if he had decided to stop acting like he was tough, but the turn of events wasn't that bad.

I was curious if he had given up on the idea of kidnapping me and taking me to Lucifer, but he didn't seem to be in the condition to think about that.

My priority was to see if there was something wrong with him physically or if he was suffering from a sequela. I also examined myself to see if there was anything wrong with me, but I couldn't find anything weird.

'That's probably why it took some time.'

The pillar of light just now had allowed my body to accept holy power in a streamlined and gentler way. If they had bestowed power upon me, just like how Lucifer gave Kim Hyun-Sung her power, I would have probably exploded into a body mist.

The higher-ups and Benigoa probably took measures to prevent that. If something untoward had happened to me, Doom Hyun-Sung would have rallied the demons against the gods and goddesses up above.

It was a sight that they never wanted to see, so they made sure to do their best.

However, I actually believed that Doom Hyun-Sung would have still done that if I hadn't said anything to him just now.

The unfortunate part was that despite experiencing this careful process, there was a limit to how much power I could receive. Doom Hyun-Sung received ten wings, so I was sure they wanted to give me ten wings as well, but it was just impossible for me.

I was a bit sad, but I wasn't disappointed.

Meanwhile, I saw Kim Hyun-Sung running toward me while crying.

"*Ahhh…*"

'Oh dear, just look at our regressor… '

He went through all that fuss, so he was riddled with injuries.

He was scorched by the intense holy power. He looked like he wanted to say something, but he couldn't speak properly. The sight of him choking up scratched my conscience slightly.

"*Ah, ugh…*"

I was curious as to what I looked like in his eyes because even I wasn't used to my current form. The pure white wings that were made out of light were indescribable. Each and every feather was made out of radiant light. Overall, I looked so holy that I could be compared to Benigoa when she descended on the continent. The radiant light, which couldn't be compared to the light of the Light Bomb Potion, filled the dark cavern we were in. I looked as if I could purify all the dirty things in the world just by existing.

When my feet touched the ground, a shockwave of light burst out from where my feet landed.

'God of the new world! I-I-I've become light itself.'

It was a bit cringy, but if I were in Kim Hyun-Sung's shoes, I would have thought this way—Lee Ki-Young's light was so pure that it couldn't be tainted. I couldn't help but start smiling at the thought.

'Lucifer noona, are you watching this?'

I still had no idea what she really wanted, but I felt like I had gotten revenge on her.

'You crossed the line, you know?'

I probably wouldn't work under her even if I ended up standing on the side of the demons. Her plan was pretty bad, as there was no way our relationship would be torn apart by a trivial incident.

Kim Hyun-Sung would definitely save me even if the two of us were in mortal peril.

I held back my laughter and just smiled for now.

'There's no problem between us now, right? Right?'

Well, Kim Hyun-Sung was still Doom Hyun-Sung because I could still see his pitch-black wings. However, it wasn't completely out of my expectations. I knew it would be difficult to push out the power of a Transcendent.

However, it wasn't that Kim Hyun-Sung was too weak to do so.

'It's just impossible.'

Kim Hyun-Sung had already swallowed the poison, and even Benigoa couldn't cure it, which meant that he couldn't be cured in the meantime.

I frowned upon realizing that, but it was a fact that I had completely ruined whatever Lucifer's plan was. I was curious as to what she thought about the turn of events, but I was relieved to see Kim Hyun-Sung being drunk in the light right now.

"I-I'm… sorry," Kim Hyun-Sung stuttered.

'He apologized first. Things are going smoothly. You're not going to suddenly get angry, right?'

I had been thinking that he had been crying a lot recently.

I tried to step forward because I felt like I was about to fall to the ground, but he took a step back in surprise. It seemed that he didn't want to approach me carelessly. It was understandable because he was completely covered in blood, and he said that he had hideous wings.

He was definitely thinking that not only was he unholy, but he was also an opponent of my blinding radiant light. Well, I was sure things would get better as time went on because Lucifer would gradually lose her powers now that the higher-ups had become aware of her shenanigans.

"I'm… sorry," he repeated.

'Yeah, you should be sorry. I really thought you were done for.'

"I'm… I'm sorry," he muttered.

'You tried to hit me. Shit, you should really reflect on yourself for even thinking of hitting me.'

"I-I'm sorry about everything," he said.

'Everything else is fine. I understand why you did it.'

"*Heuuuk!* I'm sorry," he cried.

'Damn it. He thinks it's all his fault.'

He was apologizing for accepting Lucifer's powers, but that wasn't all. He probably thought that he had gotten Lee Ki-Young involved. Lee Ki-Young could have lived a normal life, but now, he had to carry an immensely heavy burden, and Kim Hyun-Sung thought that it was all his fault.

'I get it; it's understandable.'

Kim Hyun-Sung was crying while apologizing for getting me involved in silly things. He was also apologizing for even confessing his regressor status in the first place and for letting me carry his burdens with him.

It was great that he was blaming himself rather than resenting me, but his mental health would suffer at this rate. He looked kind of unstable, so I thought that it would be best for me to talk to him, as it felt like it was about time I heard his story.

'We happened to have a lot of time.'

I looked up and saw a hole in the ceiling. I was happy about the fact that a new exit was created thanks to the light that broke through the dungeon.

When I spread my wings, I floated up slowly. I wasn't used to it, but it was kind of an interesting feeling, and when I landed on top of the Queen's Tomb, Kim Hyun-Sung followed me.

I saw the vast continent with one glance. It was dark, but the radiant light created a

picturesque night view for us to see.

“It’s a nice sight,” I commented.

“…”

“The scenery is really great,” I added.

‘Control your emotions, Ki-Young. Don’t get distracted. The ending is important in everything. The end is just a part of an incident. Pay attention and focus.’

I had to look as if I would never forget this scenery, but I had to prevent myself from looking as pitiful as possible. I thought perhaps it would be best to show mixed emotions and to show him that I was willing to accept the fate that was dealt to me.

‘I’m not sad.’

I would probably forget this scenery, but it was something I could see whenever I wanted to see it. No matter how lonely or sad I would be after this, I wouldn’t fall apart.

I would never betray the continent and would happily accept my fate despite my fragile body.

I looked at the night view again with tears in my eyes.

The single tear that fell down my cheek didn’t fall because I resented my fate and felt miserable about it. I was just admiring the beautiful sight.

It was a pure tear that came from the depths of my soul in response to the liveliness of the continent as well as in awe of the great landscape that nature had sculpted over many years.

‘Shit. My tears are sparkling.’

I wasn’t sure if it was because my job had become a Mythic-rank job, but my tear was sparkling. Kim Hyun-Sung’s shock only lasted for a moment because he looked at me cautiously.

“Will it…” Kim Hyun-Sung paused.

“Yes?”

“Will it really…” he paused again.

“Yes?”

“Will it really be okay?” he asked.

“Yes, I’m sure it will be fine,” I answered.

“…”

“I’m sure nothing will happen,” I added.

I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung would take the party members away with him and run if something were to go wrong.

“Can you… can you really handle it?” he asked.

“Yes. It’ll be impossible by myself, but I have everyone with me…” I said.

“Are you sure… that it’s going to be okay?” he asked.

“Please don’t make me repeat myself. I told you many times that nothing will happen. If I lose my memories, are you going to abandon—”

“I will never do that…” he interrupted.

“Are you going to treat me poorly…?” I trailed off.

“I won’t,” he said.

“Then, there won’t be any issues. Of course, there are some things that I feel sad about losing, but…” I paused.

“…”

“Obviously, losing the memories I made so far… is kind of heartbreaking because we’ve gone through so many things,” I continued.

"…"

"However, we'll have more time together than before. That includes Ha-Yan, Deok-Gu, and the other guild members. We might experience even more fun things than we've already experienced, and we're going to laugh a lot.

"Yes, it'll be even better than what we've already gone through. Just like this scenery that we're looking at right now," I said.

'He probably doesn't understand what I'm saying.'

"I don't know when that time will come, but the day will come when we'll forget about this scenery. B-But… we'll be able to see the same scenery any time we want because this scenery will last forever," I added.

'He probably still doesn't understand what I'm talking about. He probably thinks that I'm just spouting bullshit here.'

"I don't understand. I really don't…" Kim Hyun-Sung said.

'Just wait, Hyun-Sung. You'll understand soon.'

I thought it was about time, but the sky remained unchanging, which made me feel pretty annoyed. I started to feel embarrassed at the idea that we would have to stand here and wait for a long time until *it* arrived.

Fortunately, the sky started changing. The last event I had in mind was the two of us watching the sunset together.

Kim Hyun-Sung saw the sunset, and he turned toward me quietly.

I figured that he was starting to understand what scenery would last forever.

"It's a nice sight," I commented.

I looked as if I couldn't remember what the sunset meant for the two of us. Well, I could still remember what it meant, but I acted like I had just remembered it.

I would soon forget about the past, but new memories would fill up the void that they would inevitably leave. I hadn't said anything to Kim Hyun-Sung, but his

shoulders were trembling; he could obviously feel what I was feeling.

I couldn't quite deduce what he was thinking since we started looking at the sunset, but his reaction wasn't really negative in my eyes. In fact, I was sure he was reminiscing about the good old days.

"If…" I said.

"…"

"If I forget the sight I'm looking at right now…" I paused.

"Yes?"

"Please come back and watch it with me again," I requested.

"*Heuk*… Okay," Kim Hyun-Sung answered.

"That's all I need. I just need to see this again," I told him.

"…"

"That alone is enough," I said.

"*Heuk… heuk…* O-Okay," he stuttered.

I nodded as I watched Kim Hyun-Sung cry.

'I did a good job changing the subject.'

He took it well. If anything, Kim Hyun-Sung was probably thinking along the lines of—*I want to protect his memories*—or perhaps—*I want to protect this place.*

Kim Hyun-Sung looked into the distance. The incident was finally settled, and the regressor had recalled and carved on his heart once again as to why he had to rise up as well as why he had to fight for the continent.

In the far north on that same day, a massive pillar of light abruptly descended.

It was a foreign light in the eyes of mankind.

CHAPTER 650
FOREIGN LIGHT (1)

[Reporter Kim Sung-Kyeong.]

[This is Reporter Kim Sung-Kyeong of Lindel Broadcast. About 7 hours and 47 minutes have passed since the strange light started falling from the northern tip of the continent. The Vatican and the Continental Protection Management Committee have yet to make an official announcement, eliciting worry from many people.]

[Sister Jayna, the spokesperson of the Vatican, has stated that they were currently investigating the matter, but the Vatican hasn't given a clear explanation of what it is. Outside experts are also waiting for the Vatican's investigation team to bring results.]

[We received news that Chairman Lee Ki-Young has blocked all outside calls.]

[That's right. Chairman Lee Ki-Young has blocked all outside calls. There are rumors that it's due to health issues and that the light is somehow affecting him negatively…]

Beep.

[The Continental Protection Management Committee has cordoned off the region where the strange light appeared. Vatican's investigation team and the Continental Protection Management Committee are working together to uncover the truth.]

[They've set up a temporary camp to start the investigation, but there is still no news so far. We were also told that Father Lee Ki-Young is resting at the moment…]

Beep.

[I received new news. The Holy Democratic Country will provide a briefing about the ongoing situation…]

Beep.

[The soldiers of the joint training are heading toward the forward operating base

that was built for the sake of fighting the demons disguised as angels…]

Beep.

[Title: Did You See the News Just Now? What's Going On?]

[Written By: Compiler Kim Kyung-Sik]

[It feels like we're at war… Are the demons really coming?]

[Lindel Villager: I don't know the details either, but people are feeling restless. The guilds in Lindel are traveling north right now. I think arrangements have already been made. Overall, it seems like they're trying to keep quiet about it, and they're just not announcing it. I think Nature Lover should have an idea as to what's going on because when things like this happen, the Blue Guild is the first to respond. Honestly, I don't even know if they have time to watch this right now. Even the Blue Guild seems to be in a state of emergency…]

[Nature Lover: There will be an official announcement if you wait a little.]

[Lindel Villager: Just tell us already.]

[Nature Lover: I would have already told you if I knew what was going on. I haven't heard anything except the things that the media outlets have been saying. The soldiers are moving just in case of an emergency, and I think they're still investigating. It's not like they can just announce whatever they want.]

[Unknown ID: Is this what you call a country? It's been seven hours since the light appeared, and they still haven't made an official announcement. I normally don't say this, but I really don't know what they're doing, and Chairman Lee Ki-Young became unconscious again? They should make some kind of announcement so that we can decide on what to do. The official announcement is probably late because they're preparing to evacuate the higher-ups. Who agrees with me? If they announce—everyone, the continent is safe! Stay where you are and enjoy your daily lives!—then my assumption is right. They're going to abandon us and run away.]

[Dirt Spoon: I know what you're worried about, but Father Lee Ki-Young isn't that kind of person. He's known for sacrificing himself for the underprivileged… and I received a lot of support from him…]

[Nature Lover: That bastard isn't the real Unknown ID. Dirt Spoon is Unknown ID. The way they're talking is different, and they're using a cheap method to get aggro. Looks like security will be coming for him soon. You should've planned this out better.]

[Unknown ID: You're pretty sharp.]

[Trisha: B-But…]

[Lindel Villager: Just stop it already, man. We're already anxious because we have no idea what's going on…]

[Dirt Spoon: The way you two are bickering with each other makes you guys a nice couple.]

[Lindel Villager: I agree.]

[Nature Lover: Shut up.]

[Archangel PR Chairman: Be happy, you two.]

Beep.

[Title: I Disappointed the Person I Like. (Replies: 128)]

[Written By: I Like Blue]

[Title: The Destruction of the Continent is Imminent. Will the Chairman Remain Unconscious, and Will the Continent be Destroyed? (Replies: 123)]

[Written By: Unknown ID]

[Title: Even if a War Breaks Out, I Hope My Hands and Eyes Remain Intact. That Way, I Can Keep on Seeing Nature Lover… (Replies: 1221)]

[Written By: Nature Is Resilient Even Amidst Crimson Flames]

'Shit, that's a relief. Nothing bad happened.'

I released a sigh of relief.

First, I was relieved by the fact that I was inside a familiar room, and I was relieved once more when I realized the world wasn't in chaos just yet. I was really surprised when a pillar of light abruptly fell, just as I thought that everything was over.

The exhaustion finally got to me, and I lost consciousness. I thought the world had already been destroyed, so I couldn't help but chuckle to myself for even entertaining such a silly thought.

While looking at a Goddess' Hand Mirror, a voice echoed next to me.

"What are you laughing about when you just woke up? This is no time for laughter."

I saw Lee Ji-Hye looking at me as if she was watching something interesting.

"Just things. I fell unconscious just as the light fell. I was worried that I would wake up to a post-apocalyptic world. Looks like… nothing really happened. That makes me happy, noona," I answered.

"You must've been really surprised," she commented.

"I thought everything was over, but it seems that it's not the case. By the way, you were the one who suggested we buy those coins together and hold them, but…"

"I wanted to keep that promise, but I really didn't have a choice. I assumed you would bring that up, but I didn't think you'd actually talk about it. Why are you holding a grudge? It all worked out in the end.

"Anyway, did the guild master of the Blue Guild lease this place or something?" she asked.

"…"

"What…"

"…"

"Anyway, he really—No, forget it. What's the point of complaining about it? Anyway, you woke up pretty quickly this time," she said.

"You're right. I'm normally asleep for three days whenever something like this

happens…" I agreed.

Lee Ji-Hye looked at me suspiciously to see if I had eaten some good food or if I was just acting. To be honest, it was a reasonable suspicion because even I was a bit surprised about just how quickly I woke up. I truly didn't expect that I would recover so soon. I fell into a coma after overusing the Telescope, after all.

'I did eat some good food.'

I was overflowing with holy power, so a mere side effect wouldn't affect me.

I was so healthy that I felt like I could do a hundred push-ups every day for quite a while.

'She's here, so Hyun-Sung must be awake.'

I was worried that he would be in the arms of Lucifer, but thankfully, my assumptions were right He still hadn't completely recovered, but Kim Hyun-Sung no longer had any intentions of kidnapping me, so I was sure he was finding a way to turn back.

On top of that, he was still protecting me. Of course, he would probably take me away and run if the worse came to worst and the continent was about to be annihilated.

Basically, I wanted to give him brownie points for handling the problem well and for the fact that those demon bastards didn't come swarming right away…

Honestly, the problem was why a foreign light suddenly plummeted in the far north.

"By the way… what's causing this?" she asked.

'Shit, it's obvious, isn't it?'

It was nothing more than an assumption, but a reliable hypothesis popped into my head.

'It's the Continental Rift.'

Of course, I couldn't say things for sure just yet. I enjoyed blaming others, and I didn't want to believe that the higher-ups were that stupid, but it was a hypothesis worth

considering.

'But it doesn't make sense… It can't be right?'

It meant someone was messing with the continent's security system. It seemed to be the same continental rift that we had been trying to close. It was unfortunate, but Lucifer and the higher-ups recent actions seemed to have torn that rift wide open.

Of course, this was just a theory, but it made sense. After all, the continental rift was one of the biggest reasons why the gods felt uncomfortable about getting involved with humans.

Lucifer and the amazing higher-ups had just forced their power on us, resulting in the widening of the Continental Rift. I couldn't help but assume that the Outer bastards would enter the continent through that rift.

I nodded at my assumption.

'Dumb bastards.'

We had to hurry up and close the rift, but how could we stop that pillar of light? It felt like we were trying to stop the flow of a mighty waterfall.

It seemed Kim Hyun-Sung was aware that the foreign media outlets wouldn't be arriving soon. Otherwise, he would have stayed next to me. I had no idea how long it was going to take, but…

'It means we have time to relax.'

Still, things could have gotten worse.

"I'll tell you once I know what's going on. I'm not sure of anything yet," I replied.

"So, how much time do we have left?" she asked.

"I'm not sure about that either. I need to find out. Maybe one month? I don't think we'll have that much time, but if we're lucky, it'll be one month. By the way, where's Hyun-Sung?" I asked.

"He went to a meeting to come up with countermeasures. If it weren't for that

meeting, he would have been here," she answered.

"You didn't go?" I asked.

"What's the point of attending a meeting when you're not there? They're probably just going to discuss it, and since it'll be a waste of time, I decided not to attend. It's also filled with people who aren't very influential…" she replied.

"What about Jo Hye-Jin? Is she awake? What about Rafael?" I questioned.

"Rafael's party members are currently lying in bed like they're dead, but they're recovering. As for Miss Hye-Jin…" she trailed off.

"She probably went with Hyun-Sung," I said, finishing her sentence for her.

"No, she's in my room," she answered.

"Still?" I asked.

"Mr. Hyun-Sung told her that he would go there by himself. By the way, did those two quarrel or something? I've never seen him look at her with such cold eyes. I normally don't say things like this, but Mr. Hyun-Sung looked at our Hye-Jin as if she were some kind of human scum," she replied.

'Since when did she become yours?'

"I thought it was going to turn bloody. I made her look really nice, but… what did he say? He said she should do her job properly or something. He also said that she no longer needed to report things to him and to stop talking about stupid things.

"To make things worse, he didn't even look at her as he left as if he were cutting ties with her. Jo Hye-Jin exclaimed and stretched her hand out to stop him, but he slapped her hand away.

"You know how people don't express their anger when they're really mad? It's not just that he doesn't like her. He looked like he was absolutely disgusted with her. *Ugh*, it was really scary," she explained.

'Ah… '

“It feels like he became a completely different person. Did something really happen inside the dungeon?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

‘That’s a problem.’

I never would have imagined that he would say something like that to Jo Hye-Jin. Of course, I had an idea as to why he said that, but…

‘Wow, he must’ve felt really betrayed.’

Jo Hye-Jin had been giving him false reports about my well-being, after all. In other words, it wasn’t strange that he was furious at her. However, slapping her hand away and saying such harsh words were the hallmarks of Doom Hyun-Sung.

He still couldn’t quite escape from the pitch-black darkness of Lucifer, so he decided to exaggerate his personality a bit.

It was true that she had been giving him false reports and a part of me felt responsible for it. Of course, I was just a third party, but how could I not be worried for a friend when she was in the middle of a crisis?

She had been really helpful to me, so…

‘I should help her out with this.’

Kim Hyun-Sung was currently in a meeting, so I thought about attending the meeting as well. No, I had to attend it because I had to hear the briefing about the overall situation.

“Let’s get ready to move, noona. Tell Miss Hye-Jin to get ready as well. I’m going to attend the meeting as well,” I instructed her.

“You’re going to go now?” she asked.

“Yeah, right now,” I replied.

Lee Ji-Hye stared doubtfully at me, questioning if this was even a good idea.

CHAPTER 651
FOREIGN LIGHT (2)

“I think people will make a deal out of it if they find out that you’re working as soon as you got up… But I can’t stop you. If that’s what you want to do, you should do it. I’ll go get Miss Hye-Jin,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

“But why is Hye-Jin…” I paused.

‘In your room?’

“I was comforting her, so it turned out that way. Is there anyone here who isn’t aware of the fact that she likes your guild master? I couldn’t just let her leave looking like that, so we drank. She gets drunk pretty easily. *Ah*, you should tell Jung Ha-Yan that you’ve arrived.

”It was really difficult trying to stop her from coming here. Shouldn’t you reassure her by telling her that you’re doing fine? She seemed to be getting more and more anxious because the media is talking about all sorts of things…” she suggested.

“Yeah, I should do that. You must’ve handled it pretty well,” I commented.

“Of course I did. Honestly, someone else really suffered for it, but… I just told the Blue Guild that this was part of the media strategy and not to worry. They were convinced when I told them that you were busy with your work.

“Aside from Miss Hye-Jin, Kim Hyun-Sung, and Miss Park Lian… only a few people are aware of the incident,” she added.

“What about Deok-Gu? What is he doing?” I asked.

“Of course, he headed to the north. Elena, Sun Hee-Young, Hwang Jung-Yeon, and the guild members have already settled in the north… Cha Hee-Ra and our Yeon-Joo unni deployed the soldiers according to the latest manual. By the way, you’re going to edit it, right?” she questioned.

“Of course. I made that under the condition that all preparations are complete. However, the ongoing situation is clearly different from what I thought back then,” I replied.

“I knew you were going to say that, so I edited it a bit. I wrote it under the condition that we’re not fully prepared yet. It’s a basic guideline for now, but take a look…

”I wrote that we should push our political enemies into high-risk areas to keep it balanced, but… I’m not sure how many of our soldiers we should deploy. I’m not sure how many of them are needed to take down the enemy.

”That’s your specialty, isn’t it?” she asked.

“…”

“…”

‘You’re… really competent. You’re really cool.’

I felt like it was unnecessary for me to say that.

When did she find the time to do this when she was busy all this time? The fact that she managed to create a guideline while calming down the media and the public was just…

“Noona…” I called out.

“What?” she replied.

“I really love you,” I confessed.

“I love you, too. And I really love your sly smile. I’ve seen it before, but it makes you look really sexy,” she commented.

“…”

“*Ahem*, anyway, there aren’t a lot of guilds left in Lindel. Now that I think about it, Kasugano Yuno said that she wants to tell you something, so how about contacting her as soon as the meeting is over? For now, you should message Jung Ha-Yan,” she suggested.

"Okay."

"I prepared clothes for you to change into and a bag, so just wear those clothes. I'll go to the griffon landing area with Miss Hye-Jin… Wait, do you need help getting ready?" she asked.

"I'm not a kid. You go first, noona. I should contact Ha-Yan first, as you suggested. Take your time getting ready," I answered.

"*Ah!* And you should increase Han Sora's pay," she said.

Lee Ji-Hye left as she waved her hand while saying that.

'Yeah, she honestly deserves a raise.' I was once again convinced that Han Sora was the biggest reason why Jung Ha-Yan still hadn't erupted. *'I don't think Ha-Yan would listen just because Lee Ji-Hye said something.'*

I was sure Han Sora had worked hard to calm her down.

I looked down and saw my hand mirror vibrate.

There were over a thousand unread messages waiting for me.

[You must be busy. I miss you. I really miss you.]

[When are you done with your work? It'd be nice if you could call me even for a little bit.]

[I miss you.]

[I miss you.]

[You're not meeting someone else right now, are you?]

[I know you wouldn't do that, oppa. I really miss you. Please reply. What are you doing right now?]

[Why do you keep lying down in one spot without moving?]

[You're not with someone, are you? You're working, right?]

[What are you doing right now? Please call me.]

In total, 2,500 unread messages were waiting for me…

'That's not a lot… '

It seemed Han Sora had been working extremely hard. After writing a message as sincerely as possible telling her that I'd visit her soon, I pressed the send button.

However, I immediately received Jung Ha-Yan's reply.

[I'm sorry, Ha-Yan. I've been really busy because so many things suddenly came up. I'll take care of them as fast as possible and visit you, so wait for me a little longer.]

[O-Okay.]

[Please hurry up and come.]

[I really, really miss you.]

[I miss you so much. Can you talk for a little bit? I want to see your face.]

[Are you busy?]

'She must be looking at this all day.'

I couldn't help but wonder if she was even doing the tasks I had told her to do. I was sure Han Sora had been staying in the workshop as much as possible, but Jung Ha-Yan had probably been looking at her hand mirror and out the window most of the time.

I used the Telescope once more to see if it was still working and to see what was going on in the workshop. Moments later, I saw Jung Ha-Yan staring at her hand mirror while lying on a bed.

I immediately discovered an issue–she was on my bed rather than on her own bed.

'What the… '

The room was messy, and I had no idea why there were so many things on the floor.

It wasn't an appropriate description, but she seemed like a puppy that had gotten tired of waiting for her owner and just thrashed her owner's room.

'Why is my toothbrush there?'

Jung Ha-Yan would definitely clean my room up and make it appear as though it had never been touched since I left. However, I actually got scared thinking of that. I wasn't sure whether it was because of the one-year promise we had made or because she had already gotten used to waiting, but I was kind of surprised to see her enduring it well.

Of course, the tattered magic books and the items scattered haphazardly on the ground made it clear to me that she was really stressed. However, she would have already rushed over here if she were still the Jung Ha-Yan I had known years ago.

Clearly, she had changed a lot.

'Sora, thank you so much.'

Han Sora entered the room.

- Miss Jung Ha-Yan, it's time to eat.

- *Ah!*

Jung Ha-Yan jumped out of the bed.

Han Sora was smiling brightly at her, but her back was drenched in sweat.

It was proof that she was in mortal danger. I kind of felt bad for her, but I was distracted by the food that she was carrying with her.

'What the hell is that?'

A character with a face that resembled mine was sitting on the plate. It was so well made that it would be a waste to eat it. I wondered if she had discovered a new talent while creating the angels. Jung Han-Yan was also looking at the food with her mouth wide open. Then, she glanced at her hand mirror and spoke as if she was bragging.

- Oppa just sent me a message.

- I-I see. That's great. That's really great. *Ha, haha, ha*. That's a relief. See, I told you he'd contact you soon. L-Look at this. It says that he's still blocking people from contacting him, but he actually contacted you. This is true love. *Ha, haha.* True love indeed!

- L-Love. Right?

- Yes, love. I'm sure he's still busy with work, so it may take some time for him to get here. I guess he's busy because of the ongoing situation, but there's no way he would forget you, Miss Ha-Yan. It's true love.

- *Hehe*, you think so?

- Of course. Shouldn't we start cleaning up his room? Of course, he won't be here right away, but I'll clean this place up in a few days to the way it was before. *Ah*, you should reply to him. And before you go to sleep today, you should watch the video I made—*Ah!* Before that, I should show you the scrapbook I made. I found materials on Benigoa Net. I gathered them and made a scrapbook. How about distracting yourself while looking at it today?

- I-I-I want to see it.

- You should eat first. I'll bring it to you right now.

- And *that*, too.

- *Ah!* You must be talking about the wedding magazine I showed you last time. You're talking about the magazine Mr. Deok-Gu has been collecting, right? I'll bring that as well. Enjoy the food.

I honestly admired the way Han Sora quickly left the room as she said that.

I wanted to give her a standing ovation.

Just then, I finally noticed the unknown items strewn across my room. I was relieved that she had all the things she needed and was happy just staying in my room, but…

'What about her training?'

I saw a few magic books, but it looked like she only read a few pages before throwing

them away. Honestly, I wanted to tell her that she had to continue training. I was hoping I'd see a tremendous amount of growth after our one-year promise, but…

'Does she still need to train more?'

We were ahead of schedule, and we had less time to spare. Jung Ha-Yan's complete form was essential for the overall flow, so I couldn't help but wonder just how strong she had become.

[You've been training hard, right?]

It was ridiculous how she hurriedly got up and grabbed a tattered book after pressing a button on her hand mirror.

[Yes, I have!]

Her reply was even more ridiculous. I couldn't believe what was happening. She might be thinking that she wasn't lying because she *was* reading a book when she replied to me. I checked her stats just in case and noticed it hadn't changed much.

'Jung Ha-Yan: Is This Okay?'

A title popped up in my mind.

I had no idea when those demon bastards disguised as angels would enter the continent through that pillar of light. Unfortunately, even Han Sora wasn't courageous enough to encourage her to train.

It was understandable, as she was probably prioritizing her life and was doing her best not to offend Jung Ha-Yan. I thought it would be fine to just let Jung Ha-Yan be, but the pillar of light was still an eyesore that had to be addressed as soon as possible.

Honestly, I was only satisfied with Kim Hyun-Sung. I wasn't exactly happy about it, but he had reached a whole new level after Lucifer's powers, so I was sure he was already stronger than his previous peak in his past life.

Unfortunately, the others fell short of their final stats in their past lives.

It was a great war that lasted for a long time. The Continental Protection

Management would provide support, but there was no way the Committee's support could make up for what they lacked, which was life-and-death experiences.

Moreover, the warriors had perished beneath the masked scum's schemes, which meant that Kim Hyun-Sung didn't exactly have an idea as to how each and every warrior should develop for them to reach their peak prowess during their past lives.

I had created many events in hopes that the continent's overall strength would become higher, but we were actually experiencing a crisis despite my efforts.

Jung Ha-Yan was one of the people giving me a headache. The current Jung Ha-Yan wasn't as good as the Jung Ha-Yan in our past lives. My information about Jung Ha-Yan in our past lives had come from Kim Hyun-Sung, so it had to be reliable.

If things had gone according to plan, there wouldn't have been an issue. However, things clearly didn't go according to our plan, so…

'This is definitely a problem.'

Our preparations were insufficient, and it would be nice if the pillar of light simply vanished a year later, but there was no way that would happen. I wonder if Kasugano Yuno had known that this would happen.

I unknowingly tapped on my thigh.

'She's had enough rest.'

It was time to pressure her. I felt kind of bad for Jung Ha-Yan, but I had no choice.

We were desperate, so it had to be done.

[Mijin, you're training hard, right? I want you to know that I think you're the most important person here. I've been relying on you a lot, and I have high expectations of you, especially your magic. You're the pillar of the plan. Once this is over, we'll…]

[…]

[*Huh?*]

[Oppa?]

[Who's Mijin?]

[I-It's no one, Ha-Yan. Don't worry about it. Looks like I sent it to the wrong person.]

[…]

[I think I got hacked.]

I felt especially sorry for Han Sora.

[I got hacked.]

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